MEDITATIONS

ON

ST. JOSEPH.

BY

BROTHER PHILIPPE,

SUPERIOR-GENERAL OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

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INTRODUCTION.

My very dear Brothers,—

Christians, and especially religious, cannot meditate too deeply on the life and virtues of the glorious St. Joseph, on his holy death, his power with God, and the protection he extends to the faithful who are devoted to his service; but there are none to whom these consoling and instructive subjects should be more the special object of meditation than to us.

St. Joseph is the patron of our Institute—that is to say, he is our model, our guide, and our protector. We ought, then, by meditation, to study his perfections for the purpose of imitating them, to listen to his teachings that we may put them in practice, and to give ourselves a just idea of his goodness and his power of intercession with God, so as to have the greatest confidence in him.

Nothing appears to us more in conformity with the spirit of our congregation than this.

As our Venerable Founder taught us, we should often dwell upon the mysteries of the divine Infancy, entertain a great devotion to the most holy Virgin, live by faith, and be animated with zeal to lead our pupils to preserve their souls in the state of innocence. But do we not directly tend to these ends by frequent meditation on St. Joseph?

It is impossible to meditate on this great servant of God, without considering him in his relation to the

Child Jesus, and without contemplating and adoring, in union with him, our divine Saviour in his holy infancy and his hidden life. Neither can we meditate on St. Joseph without thinking on the most holy Virgin, and uniting ourselves with him in honoring and blessing her. Joseph is admirable considered in himself, but he is infinitely more so when viewed in his relations to Jesus and Mary. It is, therefore, from this point of view that we always consider him, and it is on this account that, by meditating on St. Joseph, we kindle in our hearts true and solid devotion to the divine Infancy and the most holy Mother of God.

To meditate on St. Joseph is eminently calculated to make us live by faith. The prerogatives and virtues of our holy Patron may be a source of the most salutary thoughts to us, and such as are admirably in keeping with our holy state. There is in these a true spiritual treasury from which we can never draw too much, and whose effect will assuredly be to elevate our thoughts to the things of God, to lead us to the practices of an interior life, and to procure for us, moreover, the sweetest consolations; for it is always a source of joy to the Christian soul to meditate on the greatness and prerogatives of the saints, and how liberal and munificent God is towards those who serve him.

To meditate on St. Joseph is, besides, to instruct ourselves admirably in our duties as teachers, and to lead us to practice all the virtues necessary in our relations with children.

To meditate on St. Joseph is, moreover, to put ourselves in the dispositions to train up our pupils in true devotion to him, to contribute on our part towards that

movement that is every day extending his worship in the Church, and to which the children of the Venerable de la Salle can least of all remain indifferent.

Such are the advantages which the salutary practice of meditating on St. Joseph may procure for us. Therefore, we do not doubt that you will receive with pleasure the work we this day present to you.

We have written it simply, and with no other end than for your advantage. We have placed our thoughts in direct harmony with the subject, and have wandered as little as possible from it. Sometimes we recur to the fundamental ideas, preferring to repeat them rather than substitute others that have a very distant connection with St. Joseph.

Although we have written this book especially for the use of our congregation, yet it may be found very profitable to persons outside of it. Subjects of reflection for the use of the pupils may be met therein; most of the thoughts expressed there, especially such as have relation to the virtues and patronage of St. Joseph, are of a nature calculated to induce children and young persons to imitate and invoke him.

We should do in regard to the Meditations on St. Joseph as with those on the Passion, the Last End, and the Religious Life, reading the Résumé after evening prayers, and the text on the morning following, at the beginning of prayers, and finally applying all the faculties of our soul to the subject, according to the method made use of in our Institute.

We should make use of them: 1st, Every day in the month of March, unless the spirit of the Church invites us to meditate on some other subject; 2d, On the first

Wednesday of each month, and even on every Wednesday in the year, if this should be thought to be advantageous; 3d, On all the festivals of St. Joseph, and on the days that precede and follow them.

They may also be found useful for spiritual reading, particularly on the days consecrated to the honor of our glorious protector.

May this book prove to all of some advantage in the work of our sanctification! May it help us to acquire more and more an interior spirit, and conform us to the resemblance of the august Patron of our Society! We will bless God for such a result, which is, you know, all that we desire upon earth.

BROTHER PHILIPPE.

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MEDITATIONS ON ST. JOSEPH.

FIRST MEDITATION.

DESIGNS OF GOD ON ST. JOSEPH.

"Behold the faithful and wise servant, whom the Lord hath set over his family."—St. Matt. xxiv. 45.

CONSIDERATION.

When our first parents had lost through their disobedience their state of justice and sanctity, God, listening only to his mercy, resolved to do for guilty man what he had not done for the rebel angels, and to renew his covenant with him. He determined, then, when the fulness of time should be accomplished, to send his Son into the world, that through him men might find favor in his eyes, and attain to their heavenly country; and therefore he chose the most holy and immaculate Virgin Mary to be the Mother of our Saviour.

But for that incomparable Virgin a spouse was necessary to be the guardian of her purity, and her protector; and also for the divine Infant himself, who was to be born with all our weaknesses and wants, there was needed a support, a nursing Father, and a pro-

tector: such, in truth, was the double mission of St. Joseph.

But let us consider how advantageous that choice was to this holy patriarch, and also how honorable it was to him.

That choice was advantageous to him, because God, who called him to fulfil such duties, first adorned him with those graces that were needful to discharge them worthily. He embellished with the purest virtues the soul that was to enter into such intimate relations with Jesus and Mary. He endowed him with the greatest purity and most loving piety—him whom he destined to be the spouse of the most pure and most holy Virgin. He gifted in a supereminent degree with charity, devotedness, and love of sacrifice him whom he associated to his adorable Son, who came to sacrifice himself for the love of men.

The choice which God made of Joseph was advantageous to him through the singular favors that came from it as from their source. Who can imagine how far these heavenly gifts with which his soul was endowed in the beginning, developed themselves? or to what a degree the fire of divine love increased in a heart thus placed in contact with the heart of Jesus, and with that of Mary? or to what a point his purity attained who was to dwell more than thirty years with the Virgin of virgins and the Queen of angels?

The choice which God made of Joseph was likewise advantageous to him, because of the glory with which that Sovereign Master would recompense the fidelity of his servant.

But that choice was not merely advantageous to

Joseph, it was likewise most honorable to him. And, in truth, the more this great saint was favored with the graces of heaven, the more faithfully did he correspond to them. God had great designs for him, but he admirably responded to the designs of God, so that by the worthy correspondence of his will, he rose to the height of his sublime mission. Let us say, then, "Glory to God, who gave Joseph in the beginning so many and such precious favors;" but let us also add, "Honor to St. Joseph who corresponded to all, so as to fulfil exactly what God expected of him."

The choice of God is equally honorable to St. Joseph through the excellence of the ministry with which it invested him.

The prophets had seen in spirit the Mother of the Redeemer, and they regarded it as a happiness and glory to make her known to men; they esteemed themselves infinitely honored in being chosen to announce the beloved of the Sovereign King, the Virgin who was to give to earth the Desired of nations; but however exalted their ministry was in regard to Mary, it did not approach to that of Joseph, since that just man, so highly privileged, was to dwell with her whom they announced, to be her spouse and her protector.

But the ministry of Joseph, in regard to Jesus, is more glorious still than what he had to fulfil towards the most holy Virgin. Here it is we have reason to praise that great servant of God, and to congratulate him on the choice that was made of him.

Abraham, that king of patriarchs, that father of the chosen race, that man so honored among men, and so favored by the visits of angels, had thrilled with joy at

contemplating, beyond the course of ages, the Redeemer that was to come into the world; he would have deemed it the height of happiness to see him, were it but for an instant. What in his eyes would have been the ministry of one who was to live in the closest intimacy with this Saviour-God, the object of so many hopes and desires? What esteem would he have felt for the just man who was to be the representative of all the just men of the old covenant, and in whom the patriarchs and prophets were to gather the fruits of the divine promises; for him who was to be, not merely the witness, but also the co-operator in the work of the salvation of the world?

Yes, the ministry of Joseph was glorious to him; it was also a direct concurrence in the mission of our Saviour; it was an active part in the redemption of men; it was man working with God to save man. Had the Most High proposed it to his angels, to those princes of heaven, to those creatures so excellent and so exalted above us, with what gratitude would they not have accepted it! How honored would he consider himself who should have been selected to be the guardian, the defender of the Word of God! What title of glory would not be given to him who should have been chosen to be the protector of the Queen of heaven!

It is true, then, that Joseph was honored with a glorious ministry; that in view of that ministry, he was favored with graces without number, to which he corresponded with perfect fidelity. It is true also that he is dearly beloved by our Lord, and that as Mary is blessed amongst all women, so is he amongst all men,

and that he ought, after that glorious Queen, to be the first object of our respect and homage.

APPLICATION.

We also—we who are religious teachers—have been chosen by God for the work of his mercy towards men. That good Master has called us to co-operate, by our example, our prayers, and our labors, in the salvation of many, and he has given us, in anticipation, all the graces that are necessary for us to do the good that he expects from us.

Do we enter into his designs in our regard? Do we esteem ourselves greatly honored by the choice he has made of us? Do we testify our gratitude to him for it? Are we disposed to correspond to his graces? Does he find us faithful, as St. Joseph was? Alas! does it not frequently happen to us to leave his most excellent gifts unproductive, and that in place of elevating us to the degree of virtue to which he calls, we remain creeping upon the earth in a deplorable spiritual apathy.

Let us leave that state, and for that end let us implore the assistance of our glorious patron—that is to say, of him who is at the same time our protector and our model.

Oh how happy we should be, what good we should work, were our souls filled with generosity—were we men full of devotedness and upright will, desiring, like St. Joseph, only to know the will of God in our regard, and to execute that will with all the fidelity of which we are capable!

PRAYER.

O Joseph, faithful servant, whom the Lord has appointed to be the support of his Word made flesh, the consoler of Mary his Mother, and whom alone he found most worthy to be a faithful coadjutor in the great design of Providence in regard to men, obtain for us that we may do the will of the Father, meditate in our hearts on the mysteries that the Son has accomplished, and by the abundant grace of the Holy Ghost serve God with a pure heart and a chaste body.

RÉSUMÉ.

The designs of God upon St. Joseph unite him with the great design of his providence to save the world by the mediation of Jesus Christ....

The Infant God needed a Virgin Mother, and that Mother needed a spouse, to be the guardian of her virginity, and her protector....

Moreover, as the Son of God was to take upon him all the miseries of humanity, he needed a foster-father, a guardian, a protector....Joseph was charged with that twofold ministry....

Oh how advantageous that choice is to him, for it is the source of the great graces God conferred upon him, and of the holiness to which he attained by corresponding to them....

And in like manner, how honorable that choice is to him; for, 1st, his disposition to correspond to the views of God, and make his graces fruitful in his soul, was the motive for the choice made of him; and, 2d, it invested him with a ministry worthy of the ambition even of the angels....

St. Joseph was happier than the patriarchs, who hoped for the coming of the Messiah, and the prophets, who announced him when they announced his most holy Mother....

It is true, then, that Joseph was greatly honored by God, and that we ought to pay him a special homage —we, especially, who see in him our protector and our model....

FRUITS.—To esteem the grace of our vocation, and to thank God for it; to correspond faithfully to all his graces, so as to accomplish all the good that God expects of us.

SECOND MEDITATION.

PRINCIPAL MOTIVES FOR OUR DEVOTION TO ST. JOSEPH.

"This honor is he worthy of whom the king hath a mind to honor."
Esther vi. 11.

CONSIDERATION.

God wishes that we should honor St. Joseph, whom he himself hath so much honored, and whose worship he has made almost inseparable from that to the divine Infancy and the most holy Virgin; the Church invites us to unite with the inhabitants of heaven, and all the choirs of Christians,* in paying him a homage worthy of his prerogatives; our dearest interests makes it a pleasing obligation to us to pray to him with much fervor and great confidence. It is, above all, in this honor, in this worship, in these prayers, that devotion to this great saint consists: it has as its chief motives the will of God, the practice of the Church, and our own true interests.

God wishes that we should honor St. Joseph, for he himself has greatly honored him. How greatly did he distinguish him from other men by anticipatory graces, by the sublime office he entrusted to him, and by the place he has given him in heaven! Who, among the patriarchs and prophets was so favored by the Lord? Who is the angel, however elevated he

* Hymn *Te, Joseph, celebrent.*

may be in glory, who would not esteem it an invaluable happiness to fulfil the duties he fulfilled, to represent upon earth God himself in regard to his adorable Son, and the most holy Virgin? What saint, after Mary, is placed in heaven nearer to Jesus Christ —to that divine Son who makes all the glory and splendor of the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem?

God has, then, greatly honored St. Joseph; he wishes that, in imitation of him, we should honor that great saint with a worship worthy of his prerogatives. He acts towards him as Pharaoh did towards the patriarch Joseph, whom St. Bernard and a great number of other saints consider as a figure of the saint who was to bear the same name. *Can I find one wiser*, said that great king to him, *and one like unto thee? Thou shalt be over my house.... only in the kingly throne will I be above thee..... And Pharaoh took his ring from his own hand, and gave it into his hand: and he put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck. And he made him go up into his second chariot, the crier proclaiming that all should bow their knee before him, and that they should know he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt.**

That is a figure of the manner in which God acts towards St. Joseph: he has honored him; he has presented him to the veneration of nations, and he has established him over all his house—that is to say, over all humankind—for Jesus, the new Adam, and Mary, the new Eve, represented all mankind. He has likewise given him all power to communicate to us the graces we require; so that he says to us, as Pharaoh

* Gen. xli. 39-43.

did to his subjects, *Go to Joseph*, ask of Joseph; it is from his beneficent hand you will receive the succor you pray for.

We ought, then, to honor St. Joseph, because God has honored him; we ought to do so likewise because our devotion to him is most closely united to devotion to the Child Jesus and his Virgin Mother, so that we cannot excel in these last without having that in a high degree. Let us remember what St. Theresa teaches on this subject: "For my part," says she, "I do not know how any one can think of the Queen of Angels, and of the care which she took of Jesus in his childhood, without thanking St. Joseph for the succor he gave during this time to both Mother and Son."

Let us likewise say. How is it possible to contemplate the divine Word in the mysteries of his adorable Infancy, without paying a tribute of praise, without offering a worship of honor to him, who is his protector, his guardian, his adopted father?

No, we cannot conceive true devotion to the Child Jesus and his most holy Mother to exist without a great devotion to St. Joseph. If we truly love the Infant God—if we enter into the spirit of the mysteries he accomplished—if we venerate the most holy Virgin, his Mother, we shall love, we shall honor St. Joseph, who was the head of the Holy Family, and who was, besides, so much honored by Mary and Jesus himself.

Our devotion to St. Joseph has likewise as a motive the intentions of the Holy Church—the infallible interpreter of the will of Jesus Christ in our regard.

The Church wishes that wherever the praises of Jesus and Mary are heard, those of Joseph should be

heard likewise, and that the worship of that great saint should spread more and more. She exhorts the faithful to have recourse to him in all their necessities, persuaded that they will be most assuredly succored when they invoke him with piety and confidence. She encourages everything that can increase this devotion, and opens for that purpose the treasury of her indulgences. Thus we see how, under the inspiration of that spouse of Jesus Christ, the worship of St. Joseph is propagated in our days. How many chapels and oratories there are under his name! How many altars have been raised to his glory! How many confraternities, missions, and undertakings have been placed under his patronage! How many holy images serve to recall the thought of him to the faithful!

Finally, our dearest interests make it our duty to be devout to St. Joseph.

What do we, so weak and miserable, need but a powerful protector, and one full of goodness to us? Is not that, in an eminent degree, the character of St. Joseph? To what patron could we have recourse whose prayers would be more efficacious with God than those of St. Joseph, who, by the sanctity of his life, contributed so much to the ineffable mystery of the incarnation of the Word? What saint, after Mary, has more power with our divine Saviour than he who fed him by the labor of his hands, and who devoted himself without reserve to serve him?

We have, then, in St. Joseph a most powerful protector, who is, moreover, full of goodness towards us, and always disposed to succor us. Could it be otherwise, when his heart burns with the same fire of

charity as those of Jesus and Mary? How could he be but a most loving friend to us, and most anxious to do us good, he who saw in so sensible a way how much our souls, cost to our divine Saviour? How could he be but interested in our salvation, he who devoted himself to procure it for us, and who, laboring for Jesus and with Jesus, mingled his sweat with the blood that was to bring about the redemption of the world?

APPLICATION.

Let us renew our confidence in St. Joseph, and let that sentiment be one of the most lively in our hearts. How could we doubt the power and goodness of him who was so honored by God, and who was appointed the head of the great Christian family; of him who, by so just a title, is called the protector of the Church, the terror of hell, the succor of the afflicted, the patron of a good death; of him from whom we have received, both as Christians and religious, so many proofs of his protection!

Let us, then, have a true devotion to him, and let us honor him by all the means in our power; let us also cause him to be honored by those who depend upon us for instruction. Let us frequently have recourse to his intercession, and, imitating the example of God the Father, who entrusts to him what is most precious in his eyes, Jesus and Mary, let us commit our soul to him, that he may keep it for heaven. Let us place under his protection our relations, our community, our pupils, and our undertakings, and let us be assured, that we shall never invoke him without being heard in the manner most suited to us.

PRAYER.

O glorious patriarch, who has so many titles to the veneration of the faithful! I come to prostrate myself at your feet, and to consecrate myself to your service. Receive me, I beseech you, into the number of your devoted servants, and obtain for me, along with a great confidence in your power, the grace of frequently having recourse to your intercession, and imploring it, above all, in times of trial, because to invoke you, O great saint! is to assure a triumph over hell, and to take the true means of persevering in the grace of God.

RÉSUMÉ.

We should honor and invoke St. Joseph, because God himself has honored him, has appointed him to the care of the great family of the Church, and says to us, as Pharaoh formerly did to the Egyptians, *Go to Joseph.*

We should honor and invoke St. Joseph, because otherwise we could not have a true devotion to the holy Infancy, and the most Blessed Virgin. He who venerates the Child Jesus and Mary, should also venerate Joseph, the head of the Holy Family.

We should honor and invoke St. Joseph, because such is the spirit of the Church, and, finally, because our devotion to him is a true treasury from which to enrich our souls.

Let us often think that Joseph has all power in heaven, and that he interests himself in a special manner for the members of a congregation consecrated to him.

FRUITS.—To renew our confidence in St. Joseph; to consecrate ourselves to his service; to lead our pupils to entertain a great devotion towards this powerful protector.

THIRD MEDITATION.

JOSEPH, THE HUSBAND OF MARY.

"Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus."
St. Matt. i. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us to-day meditate on what these words of the Gospel make known to us—namely, the holy marriage of St. Joseph with the ever-blessed Virgin; a marriage of which God was the author, and which was associated with the great designs of his love towards us; a marriage eminently glorious and advantageous to Joseph, and which offers the most beautiful spectacle of holiness ever witnessed upon earth.

Let us reflect that God was the author of that marriage, and that he wished it for the execution of his merciful designs upon men. It is, in truth, in the order of his providence, to accomplish his will in regard to his servants by means of his servants, whom he directs at pleasure, according to the laws of his wisdom. When, then, in his eternal designs, he resolved to create the most holy Virgin, whom he destined to be the mother of his adorable Son. He decreed at the same time all the means by which he was to accomplish his designs in reference to her and the world. He selected, besides, the heavenly spirit who was to be her invisible guardian, the archangel who

was to bear the divine message, to salute her as "full of grace," and to obtain her consent for the work of the redemption of the world: such were the heavenly representatives. But Mary, the Queen of Angels, was also the daughter of Adam and of Eve; it was, then, according to order that men should concur in the designs of the divine Wisdom upon her. On that account the Most High also selects him of the children of Israel who was to be the visible guardian of that immaculate Virgin, who was to protect her, to provide for her wants, to speak to her in the name of heaven—to be, in a word, in her regard, his representative, and the personification of his providence.

Yes, he chooses him whom he destines for so great a mystery, and that man is Joseph who, by that very destiny, is raised to a supereminent degree of grace and glory. Yes, it is by Joseph that God the Father will protect his beloved daughter—that God the Son will take care of his most holy Mother—that God the Holy Ghost will watch over his spotless spouse; it is by Joseph that the most Holy Trinity will veil from the eyes of men the mystery of the Incarnation, and will preserve the Infant God and his Virgin Mother from all danger.

O Joseph, how glorious is the choice that is made of you! You must have been very pure in the eyes of the Lord, since he judged you worthy to dwell with the immaculate Virgin!

If an angel had been charged to choose a husband for Mary, he would certainly have cast his eyes on the most perfect man, gifted with the most happy and most amiable character, having a most loving heart,

an upright will, and a most innocent soul. This choice was made by the Holy Ghost; St. Joseph possessed, therefore, all these qualities. The holy Gospel in giving him the title of *Just*, presents him to us as possessing in a most elevated degree all the virtues that had shown with most splendor in the just men of the old law. The worthy husband of Mary should be, in truth, more innocent than Abel, more obedient than Abraham, more faithful than Moses, more humble than David, more pious than Ezechias, more courageous than Judas Machabeus; he should unite in himself all the characteristics of justice, by which these holy personages had pleased God, since God chose him for a ministry more elevated in dignity than those they had fulfilled.

Joseph, says St. Bernard, was created in the resemblance of the Virgin, his spouse—a resemblance that it is easy to recognize when we examine the characters and virtues of those two privileged souls.

Mary was saluted by the angel as *full of grace*, and Joseph was called *just* by the Holy Ghost; Mary is a Virgin conceived without sin, and Joseph is the purest of the children of men: those two are the lilies among which the eternal Wisdom found delight. Mary was to be the mother of Jesus; Joseph was chosen to be his foster-father and guardian. Both were to consecrate their existence and lavish numberless cares upon the Infant God, who made himself their son. Both loved him with a love which we cannot comprehend; both were, therefore, to participate in the same glory, and to be, in a certain degree, objects of the same worship. Mary was taken up into heaven in

body and in soul, and everything leads us to believe that Joseph had the same privilege on the day of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary is our advocate with Jesus; Joseph is likewise our special protector with that divine Saviour. St. Bernard teaches that it has never been heard of that any one who had recourse to Mary was rejected by her; St. Theresa assures us that no one ever invokes St. Joseph without experiencing his assistance.

By these traits of resemblance we understand what is the greatness, the dignity of Joseph, and how much God has favored him by uniting him to the most holy Virgin; we understand how he has honored him, and made him worthy of the admiration of the angels, by giving him authority over the Queen of heaven—by placing him before the eyes of men above her in whose presence all the hosts of heaven prostrate themselves.

The marriage of Joseph with Mary is, therefore, eminently glorious to him; it is also the source of the greatest spiritual advantages to him. If he was holy before contracting it, how much holier must he have become after having had that happiness?

Who, indeed, can tell us the virtues he practiced, and consequently the merits he acquired, in the company of the most holy Virgin! The angels themselves could not comprehend the greatness thereof. The soul of Joseph became more and more like to that of Mary. Both were the worthy objects of the complacency of God. What lively faith in the great mysteries that were being accomplished! what firm hope in the Divine promises! what ardent love for

God! Is it not sufficient to consider them as two seraphim endeavoring to excite each other to more ardent love? What fervor in their prayers to hasten the coming of the Redeemer of men! what fidelity in the observance of the law! what submission to the decrees of Providence! what recollectedness as to the holy presence of God! and what love for retreat, silence, and meditation!

Such is the picture, though but an imperfect one, of what passed in the holy cottage of Nazareth, which was nothing in the eyes of the world, but which was so honorable in the eyes of God. How, then, can we sufficiently honor those two holy personages who dwelt there, and who there fulfilled their sublime mission!

APPLICATION.

Let us celebrate with the Church the holy marriage of Joseph and Mary, and let us congratulate our holy protector on the choice that God made of him.

Let us admire the virtues that reigned in their humble dwelling in Nazareth, and which are, in truth, worthy of the admiration of men and angels; but, above all, let us apply ourselves to reproduce them in our conduct. Consecrated to God in the religious state, associated together the better to procure his glory and mutually help each other in virtue, let each of us do what depends on him to make our communities resemble the abode of Joseph and the most holy Virgin.

Like them, let us only act from motives of faith; let us practice a true love to God, and establish and main-

tain among ourselves the closest union. It is by this means we shall please our Sovereign Master, and make ourselves worthy of the glory he destines for us.

PRAYER.

Great St. Joseph! Mary, your glorious spouse, is our mother: be thou also our father. Look down upon your children who at this moment implore your help, and obtain for them the grace to make themselves worthy of you, by the imitation of your virtues. Maintain in all Christian families, but especially in our communities, peace, union, and concord, so that, being faithful images of the holy house of Nazareth, God may be pleased to pour down upon them his most abundant blessings.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider how glorious and advantageous to St. Joseph was his marriage with the most holy Virgin.

God willed that his creatures should concur in his designs with regard to Mary; an archangel was to salute her as full of grace, and be his representative taken from the heavenly hosts. But there needed a representative of God taken from among men That representative was Joseph.

How glorious to him was such a choice. Had an angel been appointed to choose a husband for the most holy Virgin, his choice would evidently have fallen upon the man possessed of the greatest merit; but it was the Holy Ghost himself who made that choice.

Let us honor St. Joseph, who received, in anticipation, so many graces, and let us congratulate him on the great

advantages of which his marriage with Mary was the source.

Let us reflect on the degree of perfection to which he raised himself when in the company of the most holy Virgin. Let us ask ourselves what virtues he practiced with his virgin spouse. What faith! what hope! what charity! What union! what concord! what respect one for the other! What recollectedness as to the holy presence of God!

Let us not forget that every Christian society should strive to reproduce that union of Joseph and Mary, and that our communities ought to be a faithful image of the holy house of Nazareth.

Fruits.—To respect and honor our brothers; to live in the greatest union with them.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH, NURSING FATHER OF THE CHILD JESUS.

"Take this child, and nurse him for me: I will give thee thy wages."
—Exodus ii. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us consider with all the attention of which we are capable, what were the great designs of divine Wisdom in regard to St. Joseph, and the favors that were communicated to him in consequence of his marriage to Mary, the glorious Mother of our Saviour.

From the moment when the Word offered himself to his Father, and said to him, *Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, Behold, I come,** it was decided in the designs of the most holy Trinity that God the Son should become man, and come to dwell among us, to be the victim of our reconciliation, and the mediator between heaven, and earth, and then everything was decreed that had reference to that great work of mercy.

The divine Word was to put on our nature with all its infirmities, to pass through the different ages of life, to become a child, to humble himself so as to receive in his feebleness all the helps that were then become necessary. It was needful, therefore, that

* Ps. xxxix. 8

Providence should choose for him a protector, a guardian, an adopted father, who might share with his most holy Mother all the cares he might need, and to whom both mother and child might be entrusted. It was Joseph for whom this admirable mission was destined.

O glorious choice! O sublime ministry! Joseph is chosen by God to represent him with his divine Son! Joseph is going to share with God that title of Father, which is the subject of the infinite glory and happiness of the first person of the adorable Trinity! To him also the divine Word will say, "You are my father;" for he will represent his eternal Father in his regard.

What perfections are yours, O Joseph, who have been the object of such a choice! What sentiments has God placed in your heart, to make you his representative with Him who is the object of his infinite love? What has he then seen in you to single you thus among men in so glorious a manner?

He has seen your fidelity in corresponding to his graces; he has seen your love for justice; he has seen the purity of your heart, and your zeal for virtue, and he said: "I have found the Son of David, who is a man wholly according to my heart, and whom I will make use of to accomplish the great designs of my mercy."

The choice which God made of Joseph proves that his soul was endowed with all heavenly gifts, and that he had the purity of will which God requires to operate great things by human means. His mission of foster-father to Jesus is eminently glorious to him, if considered in its cause: it is equally so, if considered in itself.

In what, in reality, does it consist? Is it not in being the guardian, the protector, the support of the Infant God? Now, what can be conceived more excellent?

He of whom it is written, *Thou openest thy hand, and fillest with blessings every living creature;* * he who feeds all that lives, wishes to be fed by Joseph, and to ask from him his daily bread. What humility on the part of God! but what a dignity to the man towards whom he places himself in such a state of dependence!

God has said to Israel, *If I should be hungry I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof;* † and behold, nevertheless, how this adorable Master, became man for love of us, addresses himself to one of the children of Israel, and stretches out to him his divine hands to receive from him his nourishment.

But Joseph not only provided for the wants of Jesus, he had also the most intimate relations with him.

Let us dwell, O Christians! in contemplation on that holy patriarch pressing in his arms, and to his heart the God who had made himself his adopted child. Let us, like the angels of heaven, be astonished that on the bosom of a poor workman reposes the King of glory, who, out of love, gives him the sweet name of father. It is with reason that the Church exclaims: "You receive the Lord into your arms. Others, O Joseph! are glorified after their death, and placed in the ranks of the heavenly spirits; but you, equal and even superior to the saints, enjoy even in this life the presence of your God." ‡

* Ps. cxliv. 16. † Ps. xlix. 12. ‡ Hymn to St. Joseph.

The relations of Joseph with the Incarnate Word are above the grasp of our understanding. They are so excellent that, in recalling them to mind, the soul can only remain silent in sentiments of the profoundest admiration. They make us understand how God has elevated that holy patriarch, and what sublime virtues he practised in the exercise of his exalted ministry.

But let us again contemplate Joseph pressing Jesus in his arms; let us see his heart so near to the heart of the Infant God, and receiving the influence of the purest, the most ardent, the most generous love that ever was, or will be, and we will understand how Joseph loved Jesus with all the love possible to a creature. How could it be otherwise? Representing the Father in regard to the Son, he participated in an eminent degree in the infinite love of the Father for the Son: therefore, he loved the Infant God, and he loved him without measure. His love for Jesus was a love divine in its source as in its object, and which produced all virtues in him.

Joseph loved Jesus, and as a consequence Joseph was good, pious, courageous, and zealous; his mind thought only of Jesus; his heart sighed only for Jesus; his happiness was to suffer for Jesus. Joseph loved Jesus, and Joseph therefore loved all men, because he saw Jesus in all. Joseph loved Jesus, and consequently he desired that the kingdom of Jesus should be established. In the way that Providence required of him, he labored for that end with the greatest purity of intention and the most perfect disinterestedness.

Let us not be astonished that the mission of Joseph in reference to the Infant God was eminently advantageous to him. Let us praise him for his fidelity in answering to the designs of Him, who made use of him for so exalted a ministry. Let us bless the Lord, who glorified him, and who, by the favors with which he enriched him, permits the Church to apply to him those words of holy Scripture: "The just man will flourish forever before the Lord. The Lord loved him; he clothed him with honor; he gave him a robe of glory. O Joseph, the God of your father will be your protector, and the Almighty will crown you with blessings from on high. Yes, blessings will be poured forth upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of him, who is as the Nazarene among his brethren." *

APPLICATION.

Let the mission of Joseph in regard to the Infant God lead us to have confidence in this great saint; for it assures to him all power in heaven, where Jesus is still pleased to give him the sweet name of father, and to grant him all that he asks.

Let us see in the Child Jesus all Christians, who in truth compose the mystical body of our Lord, and let us understand how Joseph is the protector of the whole Church, but especially of Christian children. Let us pray to him for all the faithful; let us pray to him with the greatest fervor for our pupils, and let us entreat him to watch over their souls as he watched over the Child Jesus.

Let us see in Joseph our model as to the care we

* Office of St. Joseph.

should bestow upon our pupils; for God has said to us, to each of us, those words of holy Scripture: *Take this child, and nurse him for me: I will give thee thy wages.*

Let us practice, then, in the exercise of our duty, the virtues we admired in St. Joseph. Let us love Jesus in the person of our pupils, and let us love him with that efficient, ardent, courageous love which makes one forget self, so as to live only a life of devotedness and self-sacrifice.

PRAYER.

Glorious St. Joseph! who, by the practice of all virtues, didst so well prepare your soul for the sublime ministry to which God called you, and who afterwards didst so well fulfill its duties, without suffering yourself to be checked by any obstacle, obtain for us the grace of discharging well the duties entrusted to us, of devoting ourselves to them through love of Jesus, and of never seeking anything but the glory of that adorable Saviour, our own salvation, and that of our pupils.

RÉSUMÉ.

Under whatever point of view we consider it, how glorious was the ministry of St. Joseph in regard to the divine infancy of Jesus!....

The divine Word, when assuming our nature, wished to experience all its miseries: who then will come to help him in the wants that childhood calls for? Who will be chosen by him to hold the place of father towards him?....

Certainly the angels would be honored by such a mission....Yet it is not an angel who is chosen; it is Joseph.

He it is whom the eternal Father appoints to represent him with his Son, the object of his infinite love....

Let us honor St. Joseph for such a choice which procured him the most precious graces in anticipation of it; let us honor him still more for his fidelity in corresponding to them....

What a glorious mission is entrusted to him! Joseph is the protector of the Almighty; he feeds Him who feeds every creature that breathes; the Son of the eternal Father obeys him as if he were his own son; he clasps in his arms and presses to his bosom the Infant God!

Ah what sentiments arise in his heart, placed so near to the heart of Jesus! Let us think how divine love, and consequently all other virtues, must have been strengthened thereby.

FRUITS.—To honor St. Joseph as the protector of the Church; to invoke him as the patron of Christian children; to remember that the care he lavished on the Infant Jesus are the model of those we owe to our pupils.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS OUR MODEL IN THE HONOR WE PAY TO JOSEPH.

I honor my Father.—St. John viii. 49.

CONSIDERATION.

THESE words of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Jews referred to his heavenly Father; but they may also be applied to St. Joseph, whom he honored, and still most truly honors.

Let us, then, O Christian souls! contemplate our adorable Master honoring and glorifying his adopted father. Let us think on the reasons why he pays him his homage; and considering that He is our model, let us entertain the greatest veneration, and consequently the truest devotion, towards our glorious patron and protector.

Jesus honors St. Joseph particularly by the title of father which he gives him, by the dependence in which he places himself towards him, and by the acts that are the expression of his respect.

Jesus gives Joseph the name of *father*. What an honor he thereby gives him! He thus places him above the angels, since none of them has received a title so excellent, and he recognizes him as the representative of his heavenly Father. Does he not honor Joseph in a sublime degree by that name, which he has given to no other creature? And yet he seems

to honor him more by that state of subjection in which he places himself in regard to him.

The Son of God in becoming man might have suffered, and yet stood in need of the help of no one upon earth. But such was not his will. For reasons approved of by his infinite wisdom, he wished to participate in all our miseries, to pass through all the phases of our existence, to reduce himself to the condition of an ordinary child—weak, powerless, incapable of defending himself, and consequently requiring assistance and protection.

Let us consider him, at his entrance into life, placing himself in the hands of St. Joseph, taking him to serve as a support, a master, and a guide, entrusting himself to his prudence and his goodness, saying to him: "Behold me, O my loving father! I abandon myself into your hands. If I am cold, you will warm me; if I am hungry, you will feed me; if I am persecuted, you will protect me: in all circumstances, you will lavish your cares upon me. And on my side, acting as your son, I will show you the most loving respect, and will render you the most perfect obedience."

Let us think that He to whom we apply that language is the Word of God, who raises up all that he touches, who gives a supernatural force to all that comes in relation with him, and let us ask ourselves what honor is that he confers on Joseph by thus submitting his sacred humanity to him.

O holy patriarch, how Jesus honors you! He who has no equal has given you authority over him. He who is Omnipotent has put himself under your pro-

tection; the supreme Master of all things comes to ask your assistance! May we not with reason ask which is the most wonderful—the humiliation to which he lowers himself, or the honor to which, as a consequence thereof, he raises you?

Yes, Jesus honored Joseph by the dependence, in which he placed himself in regard to him, and also by his acts of filial respect and obedience.

Who can give us to understand what was the conduct of the Infant God towards his nursing father? In what terms he spoke to him, with what reverence he asked of him what he needed, with what outpourings of the heart he expressed his love, and his gratitude to him?

Oh! how pleasing is the contemplation of such a picture! What emotions the soul experiences whilst representing to itself, for instance, the divine Child embracing St. Joseph with the most lively affection, or coming in the mornings, after having adored his eternal Father, to offer the homage of his respect to his adopted father! How is the heart affected when, advancing to a later period, we contemplate Jesus helping Joseph in his painful labor, sweetening the hardships of it, and, in intervals of rest, allowing him to repose his head upon his sacred heart, as on a future occasion he once allowed the beloved disciple to do!

That divine Saviour equally honored St. Joseph by his obedience. With what docility and promptitude did he fulfil his orders, or rather with what zeal did he anticipate his wishes! The Gospel distinctly alludes to it by these words, which are St. Joseph's

highest title to nobility: *He was subject to them.** What a spectacle is that of Jesus fulfilling with the greatest exactitude the will of his adopted father. Ah! doubtless penetrated with confusion at the sight of the eagerness of his Lord and his God to do what he ordered. Joseph did not dare to command him, and, on the contrary, testified to him that he would count himself more happy in having to obey. But no doubt Jesus gave him to understand that this was necessary, in order to fulfil all justice. By this means he wished to give the world an example of submission and obedience, and to glorify his Father by subjecting himself to him who represented Him on earth.

Let us bless our divine Saviour, while honoring his dependence on his adopted father, and let us reflect on the reasons that induced him to act so.

Jesus honors Joseph because he considers him the representative of his heavenly Father, and because that holy patriarch received in his regard all the rights of a father over his son.

Jesus honors Joseph because he recognizes in him true features of resemblance to God his Father; because he sees in his soul an image of Him, whom he adores, and whom he loves with an infinite subjection and love.

He honors him also from a motive of gratitude for the numberless services received from him, and for his devotedness to his interests and to those of his most holy Mother.

Jesus honors Joseph because he wished to give men an example of the respect they ought to have for

* St. Luke ii. 51.

those who have authority over them, and moreover because he wished to present him to our veneration, and to establish the devotion of which he is the object.

Let us, then, listen to our divine Master, who says to us, in reference to his adopted father, "I have honored him; honor him, you who are my disciples, and you, above all, who have been made, in an especial manner, my imitators, by the grace of a religious vocation with which I have favored you: *I have given you an example, that as I have done .... so you do also.*" *

APPLICATION.

Everything makes it an obligation on us—an easy one, it is true, but still a real one—to be devout to St. Joseph. Do we, then, act up to that obligation? Have we a true devotion towards our glorious protector?

Do we honor him as well as we can? What do we do for that end, and, in particular, what zeal have we for his glory and the propagation of his worship?

Do we pray to St. Joseph with much fervor and confidence? Do we pray to him frequently? Do we pray to him for those who are dear to us, and, more especially, for our Society, which, at its very commencement, was placed under his patronage?

Do we imitate his virtues, and do what is the essential part in devotion towards him?

If our conscience reproaches us on this subject, let us form the resolution to change our conduct. Let us cast our eyes once more on the Infant Jesus, honoring

* St. John xiii. 15.

his foster-father, and, following his example. Let us study how best to honor, love, and glorify him. Let us pray to him with fervor, and imitate him; we shall thus obtain the grace of going, one day, to heaven, there to continue the worship of veneration which we pay to him upon earth.

PRAYER.

Divine Child, who teachest us the way of salvation, while at the same time thou meritest for us the grace of walking in thy footsteps, grant that we may respond to thy wishes in the worship we offer to St. Joseph; grant that, imitating thy example, we may honor and glorify him on this earth, as far as is possible for us, so as to obtain, by his all-powerful intercession, the grace of going to honor and glorify him in heaven.

RÉSUMÉ.

Jesus honors St. Joseph by the state of dependence on him in which he places himself. He is the Most High God, and yet he places himself under him....

Jesus honors St. Joseph by the exterior acts of respect he shows him....

He honors him likewise by the most perfect obedience to his slightest wishes. What a title of nobility are those words of the holy Gospel: *He was subject to them!*

Let us ask ourselves why the Infant Jesus so honors his adopted father; let us reflect that it is—

1*st.* To honor in his person the heavenly Father whom he represents, whose image he is....

2*d.* To express his gratitude towards him for his services to himself and his most holy Mother....

3*d*. To give men the example of respect towards those who have authority over them....

But let us also recollect that it was done to lead us to venerate St. Joseph....

Let us enter into the designs of our adorable Master, and have a great devotion towards him whom we are so happy as to call our patron and protector.....

FRUITS.—To reverence the statues of St. Joseph; to pray to him with fervor, and to recommend to him the interests of our congregation.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

MARY OUR MODEL IN OUR DEVOTION TOWARDS ST. JOSEPH.

"Come, children, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."—Ps. xxxiii. 12.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us represent to ourselves Mary, our good Mother, addressing that invitation to us, and telling us to come to her to learn from her conduct what we ought to do to be truly wise and to secure our salvation. Let us anwer her appeal, and, meditating to-day on the honor that she gave to St. Joseph, let us comprehend that we cannot do better than honor him as she did, and practice a true and solid devotion towards him.

Let us meditate on the reasons why Mary honors her chaste spouse, and on the acts by which she honors him.

Mary respected and honored St. Joseph through duty, gratitude, and motives of faith; and she testified that respect and honor by instances of great deference to him, by the services she did him, and the perfect obedience with which she always accomplished his will.

Mary honored St. Joseph through duty, for in her character of spouse it was according to the law of the Lord that she should pay him respect and submission. She also honored him, and had the profoundest respect

for him, out of gratitude, for she appreciated all his devotedness to her, and still more to the Infant Jesus. No; never shall we know what passed in the heart of that divine Mother, who, on one side, loved her adorable Son so tenderly; on the other, understood how much her holy spouse did for him and her. What must have been her sentiments of gratitude! Doubtless she could not but testify it to him, above all, when she saw him devote himself to the painful labors that alone provided for the subsistence of the Holy Family.

But in addition to these natural reasons why Mary honored St. Joseph there were others of a purely supernatural order, and consequently more excellent.

Mary honored St. Joseph because she regarded him as the representative of God in her regard—as being, consequently, her lord, her master, to whom she owed respect, service, and obedience.

Mary honored St. Joseph because she saw him greatly honored by God himself, who had raised him to the dignity of adopted father of his adorable Son, who had entrusted to him the care of Him who is the sole object of his complacency.

Mary honored St. Joseph as the medium through whom God's orders were communicated to her; she was not ignorant of his direct relations with the angels, and how much the Holy Ghost was in him to direct him in all his conduct.

Mary honored St. Joseph because she knew his perfections—because she knew how pleasing his beautiful soul, adorned with all virtues, was to God, who there made his tabernacle, and reposed therein with delight.

Finally, Mary honored St. Joseph because he was singularly honored by the Infant God, who had become his adopted son, and who, with so much affection, testified respect for him, and the most perfect obedience. What sentiments were awakened in her soul in regard to her holy spouse, when she saw that divine Saviour anticipate his wishes, and give him every possible mark of esteem and love!

Such are the principal motives for which the most holy Virgin honored St. Joseph—motives which led her to give him, in all circumstances, proofs of her respect and submission.

But, O Christian souls! what a subject is here offered for our admiration! Mary, saluted as full of grace by the Angel Gabriel, who spoke in the name of the Most High, is pleased to humble herself to a humble artisan whom Heaven had given her as a spouse. What a glorious homage to St. Joseph! It is the Queen of heaven who is eager to testify to him her deference, her esteem and veneration!

The old patriarch Joseph had, in his early boyhood, a revelation of the glory that was in store for him. God made him see, in a dream, the sun and the moon doing obeisance to him. But that prophetic dream was verified in the second Joseph in a more excellent way than in the first—since Jesus Christ, the true sun of justice, and Mary, the mysterious moon shining with his light, paid to him, as their head, submission, respect, and obedience.

Christians! let us contemplate the Blessed Virgin honoring her holy spouse, speaking to him with all the reserve and deference which his office of father and

head of the Holy Family required, and performing for him, moreover, all the services she could.

Yes, she who had called herself *the handmaid of the Lord*, could also say of herself, "I am the handmaid of Joseph, whom God gave me as a spouse, and in whom I honor him." She showed herself, in truth, full of attention and solicitude in his regard.

Let us, then, with the deepest emotion, contemplate Mary, the Queen of angels, working for Joseph, dividing all her time between her duties to God and her duties to her chaste spouse. She whom the glorious spirits think it an honor to serve, thinks it an honor to serve a poor artisan; puts it among her chief duties to do and even to anticipate his wishes—thus, by her submission, raising him above the angels.

O Joseph, how you are honored! you, to whom the Queen of heaven and earth made herself obedient! you, to whom she paid the homage of the most constant and entire dependence!

Thus the most holy Virgin, by her submission and testimonies of respect, honored and glorified St. Joseph. We then, we who are Christians, and wish to walk in the footsteps of our good Mother, ought to honor him by every means in our power. We have, to excite us, the example of Jesus and Mary, and we know that nothing is more calculated to attract to us their love and blessing than to love and revere him whom they so loved and revered during the thirty years that they lived with him upon earth.

APPLICATION.

Let us love St. Joseph, let us love him well, and we may feel assured that we are thereby doing what is most capable of developing in our hearts the love of Jesus and Mary.

We think it an honor, and consider it a duty, to give our love to Jesus and his most holy Mother; ought we not also to give it to Joseph, whom they both loved so tenderly. Let us not fear that dividing our affections will diminish our love for our divine Saviour and his Mother. No, no, they make but one with Joseph. To give him a portion of our heart is no more to weaken our love for them, than to love his most holy Mother is to weaken our love for Jesus.

Let us love and honor St. Joseph. By that means we shall imitate Mary. We shall do what she wishes us to do, and we shall assure her protection.

Let us love and honor St. Joseph from the motives of faith and gratitude that make this a duty upon us. We see in him our intercessor with God, our good father always full of solicitude for our congregation, and to whom we are indebted for an infinite number of favors.

Let us renew our confidence in his protection from the thought that he whom Jesus and Mary have so much honored upon earth, must be all-powerful in heaven. Let us be persuaded, that to have a great devotion to him is the most direct means to secure their assistance, and through it our preservation in virtue, our advancement in holiness and final perseverance.

PRAYER.

O holy spouse of the purest of virgins! grant that, in union with her, I may honor and thank you. From a desire to imitate and please her, I consecrate to your honor all the affections of my heart. Obtain for me a true devotion towards you, and grant that I may also succeed in inspiring it in those who are entrusted to me; so, that attracting to myself in this way the esteem of my adorable Saviour and his most holy Mother, I may deserve to go, one day, to praise and thank you in heaven.

RÉSUMÉ.

We esteem it an honor to imitate Mary, our good Mother; let that be a motive for our having great devotion to St. Joseph, whom she so much honored.

Mary honored St. Joseph from duty, from gratitude, and from motives of faith; for she saw in him the representative of God in her regard, the adopted father of her adorable son, and the channel through whom the orders of Heaven were transmitted to her.

She honored him because she knew his virtues—because she saw him the object of the respect of the Infant God.

She honored him by her proofs of respect, and by her deference to him; by the services she rendered him, and by a perfect submission to his will.

Let us contemplate the Queen of heaven become the humble handmaid of a poor artisan, and let us consider how great in the eyes of faith is he who is thus placed above her.

FRUITS.—Not to separate in our hearts our love for Joseph from that which we have for Jesus and Mary; to renew our confidence in St. Joseph, for he is all-powerful over the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

JOURNEY OF JOSEPH AND MARY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem."—St. Luke ii. 4.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Mary, in their humble abode at Nazareth, passing their days in retreat, prayer, and labor. The fulness of time is accomplished. The heavens have been lowered. The Word of God has assumed human nature, and is soon about to appear in the world.

However, it is not at Nazareth that the Messiah is to be born, but, according to the prophecy of Micheas, at Bethlehem of Juda. It will be then necessary for Joseph and Mary to go to that last city.

Let us here admire the providence of God, who, while leaving men free in their actions, nevertheless conducts all things to their end.

At that time, and as if to fulfil the decrees of the Most High, the edict of Augustus Cæsar was published, which ordained the numbering of all the nations of the Roman empire. Which, enjoining on the Jews to have their names enrolled in the city to which they belonged, made it necessary for Joseph

and Mary to go to Bethlehem, the city of their illustrious ancestors.

Joseph is informed of the edict of Augustus, and of the obligations that arise from it for himself and his holy spouse. Adoring the decrees of God, he thinks only of executing what is commanded him from the purest motives, and in the most perfect manner.

Let us consider him, then, deciding with Mary to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem; let us reflect on the character of their obedience on that occasion; let us follow them in spirit on their painful journey, and let us learn, by their example, what we ought to do to respond to the designs of God regarding us.

Joseph and Mary obey from motives of faith, for they recognize the authority of God in the ruler established over them; they only propose to second the designs of Providence in their regard; they act only through the impulse of the Holy Ghost, who directs all their movements.

Joseph and Mary obey simply—without asking for dispensations, without making representations. They obey courageously, not allowing themselves to be checked by the length of the way, nor the severity of the season, nor the other difficulties of the journey. They obey promptly and with joy. Scarcely have they known the will of Heaven, when they put themselves in a condition to execute it; and they do it without sadness, without repining, although it is very painful in their situation.

It is because Joseph and Mary were to be for men the models of perfect obedience, and to show by their actions that they possessed in the highest degree that

sublime virtue. Let us learn, then from them to obey with faith, simplicity, courage, joy, and promptitude. Let us learn also from their conduct during their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to suffer patiently the trials to which Providence subjects us, and to make out of them a precious source of merits.

Joseph then proposes to himself to make the painful journey commanded. He speaks of it to Mary, who is resigned to it, making no objection, but even consenting to it with joy, because she sees therein the fulfilment of the will of Heaven.

Yet many difficulties must naturally have presented themselves to their minds, and, without speaking of those that proceeded from the condition of the most holy Virgin, was there not the length of the journey? Would it not be necessary to furnish themselves with sufficient provisions, to make certain of shelter for the night, and to take precautions against the severity of the season. Now all that was almost impossible for Joseph, who had no resources but his own daily labor. The journey he is about to undertake will therefore prove a tedious suffering to himself and Mary.

Let us contemplate these two earthly seraphim journeying towards Judea, walking with difficulty over the uneven roads. Let us accompany them in spirit; let us observe the privations to which they are subjected. In them we behold the most illustrious of the descendants of David, and yet they have no inheritance but poverty; perhaps even they are in destitution, and forced to ask the bread of charity.

Let us think on what St. Joseph suffers in his heart at the sight of the many sufferings and privations of

the most holy Virgin, for whom he was unable to provide all that was necessary. Oh what anguish he feels, and how that suffering is increased on occasion of each repast, at the beginning of every night!

Yet Joseph is not disheartened, nor does he suffer a murmur or complaint to escape his lips. Like Mary, he practices in a perfect degree patience, resignation, and confidence in God. The sufferings he endures are only occasions for producing acts of conformity to the Divine will, and consequently augmenting his merits in heaven.

But St. Joseph, under those circumstances, not only teaches us patience and resignation by his example, he teaches us, moreover, to make out of everything an occasion to glorify God, and especially to hold no conversations with each other unworthy of our holy state.

We contemplate Joseph and Mary crossing together the mountains that separate Galilee from Judea; but let us ask ourselves how they occupy their thoughts during that journey—what portion they gave to prayer and meditation, and, above all, let us reflect on what is the subject of their discourse.

Ah! it is not the business of the world that occupies them. What care they for its politics, its riches, its transitory pleasures, when they are in such intimate relation with the eternal and immutable God? No, there is but one subject of conversation between them —the divine Saviour, the centre of all their love; the great work of the redemption of the human race that is at hand; the mercy of God towards the world; the approaching downfall of the empire of Satan, and the future establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah.

In this way Joseph and Mary, models of obedience and resignation, teach us by their example not to occupy our thoughts nor to hold discourse on anything but what refers to the accomplishment of God's work, the glory of Jesus Christ, and the salvation of souls.

APPLICATION.

Let us strive to imitate the obedience of St. Joseph. The practice of that virtue exacts sometimes many sacrifices; but let that only be a reason to make us more faithful in clinging to it. When we are commanded anything difficult—anything that goes in opposition to our wishes, that even imposes great privations upon us. Let us cast our eyes on Joseph and Mary going from Nazareth to Bethlehem; let us see if they had not, far more than we, occasion for pain and sufferings; and, finally, let us examine ourselves in the presence of God, and judge if we have need to complain—we sinners, who have merited hell, and whose condition is better than that of the purest of virgins, and the most just among men.

In imitation of St. Joseph, let us practice patience and resignation with all the perfection in our power. Let us consider it a true happiness to sacrifice ourselves for the accomplishment of God's will. Let us testify in the trials of this life, that we desire only the fulfilment of the designs of Providence.

Let us imitate Joseph and Mary in our conversations: let us not discourse on this world from which we are separated, but only on that other which is the object of our hopes, and on all that can conduce to bring us thither.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, our glorious patron, who art so perfect a model of obedience, resignation, and piety! deign, I beseech thee, to intercede for me, and to obtain for me a true love of the virtues you practiced; so that, imitating your conduct, I may merit a share in your recompense, and to go to heaven, there, with you, to praise my adorable Saviour forever.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us contemplate Joseph with Mary in the humble house at Nazareth.... The time prophesied is fulfilled;.... the Messiah is soon to be born, but at Bethlehem....

An edict of Augustus Cæsar obliges Joseph to go to that city....Let us admire in this great saint the characteristics of his obedience—at once religious, simple, courageous, prompt, and affectionate....

Let us contemplate Joseph and his holy spouse performing that long and painful journey....Let us think on what they suffer through the difficulties of the road,....the rigor of the season,....their own state of poverty;....but let us consider their patience and their resignation to the will of God.

Let us reflect also on what occupied their thoughts, and what was the subject of their discourse....

What examples to us! and how they condemn our obedience so defective, our acts of impatience so frequent, our conversations sometimes so different from what they ought to be!....

FRUITS.—To obey in a spirit of faith, with simplicity, courage, promptitude, and joy; never to give way to complaints; to converse only on what our holy rules prescribe.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

JOSEPH AND MARY AT BETHLEHEM.

"There was no room for them in the inn."—St. Luke ii. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Mary completing their long and painful journey, and entering into the city of Bethlehem. They have suffered much to get thither, and yet they are far from having emptied the cup of bitterness prepared for them!

After the fatigues of so painful a journey, and in so inclement a season, they stood in the utmost need of some suitable lodging, and food to recruit their strength. They required hospitality, and they had the more reason to count upon its not being refused them, as they were in the city to which they belonged, and where, consequently, they ought to have some acquaintances, perhaps even some near relatives.

Doubtless it was to them, that Joseph first addressed himself; but none of them wished to receive him, so that he might have repeated in the very city of David these words of the royal prophet: *I am become a stranger to my brethren.**

Yet Joseph is not discouraged. He traverses the streets and squares of Bethlehem, and applies at all the inns, but everywhere he is met by a pitiless re-

* Ps. lxviii. 9.

fusal. Let us contemplate him, O Christian souls! in that painful search for a lodging for his holy spouse and himself!

For several hours he wanders about that inhospitable city. Night begins to come on, and to bring with it an increase to the sufferings of Mary, already worn down by fatigue and privations. Let us see him approach an inn, the only one not yet visited. He stops there with the most holy Virgin. He knocks at the door, and asks shelter for his spouse and himself. They look at him, they look also at Mary; and their exterior betraying their poverty, they are answered there, as elsewhere, that there is no room for them. Then the door is rudely closed upon them, not to open again but for more fortunate visitors. Ah! who can tell the anguish that then pierced the soul of Joseph. But it is not for his own sake that he is grieved, but for Mary's.

Let us consider him under affliction and desolation of heart at not being able to procure a shelter for the most holy Mother of our Redeemer. Let us see him testify to her the sorrow he experiences, while he expends every care possible to make amends for the refusals received, and the privations she has to endure. Let us see Mary, also afflicted, but perfectly resigned. Let us hear her console him by words full of sweetness, and that manifest only contentment, peace, and joy.

But let us here make some reflections on the injustice and blindness of men who are the slaves of avarice.

The rich are received with open arms in the inns, and Joseph and Mary are everywhere rejected, because

of their poverty. Thus the Jews refuse shelter to the mother of that Messiah so ardently desired, and who is the object of their most cherished hopes. They welcome opulence because it throws gold to them, and they reject poverty, which might make them find favor before God, and which comes to them offering them in return infinite riches in the order of grace.

Yes, so it is in this world condemned by the Gospel; here false treasures are esteemed, and those that are true are despised. Men suffer themselves to be absorbed by material interests that stifle generous sentiments. In another way, the same thing takes place to-day that happened at the time of the birth of our Saviour; Joseph and Mary are refused admittance to those hearts, that do not wish to embrace the practice of honoring them, and consequently admittance is also refused to Jesus, who wishes to enter by their means.

We must, then, act in a very different way; and let us on that account be full of compassion and charity to the unfortunate, seeing in their persons Jesus Christ in poverty and suffering. Let us be devout to Joseph and Mary, and open to them the door of our hearts; for in receiving them we receive Jesus Christ, and with Jesus Christ, all good things.

Let the indifference for Joseph and Mary shown by the world, be to us a motive for redoubling our zeal to make them known, loved, and invoked by all dependent upon us. Let us often think, that if our pupils had a true devotion to the most holy Virgin and her chaste spouse, we should have done them a great service. Jesus Christ would be pleased to come and

reside in their souls, and would make them taste in the joy of a pure conscience, that peace which, since his birth, has been the inheritance of every man of good will.

Let us reflect, in the second place, on the interior dispositions of Joseph and Mary. They are both a prey to great sufferings. Their hearts are filled with anguish because they know not where to find a shelter at the time when our divine Saviour is about to be born; but they do not suffer themselves to give way to any resentment. In their souls there is only the most perfect resignation, springing from a most lively faith, and most profound humility.

They are despised, they are rejected, but nothing can disturb the serenity of their souls; they allow no murmurs or complaints to escape. Their greatest suffering is caused by their compassion one for the other, and still more by the sight of the injury their fellow-citizens are doing themselves, since, by rejecting them, they are rejecting the God that comes to save them. Perfectly resigned, they do not suffer themselves to give way to discouragement; and the more they see themselves deprived of the help of men, the more they strengthen their confidence in God.

O Joseph! O Mary! how beautiful is your resignation, when seen by the eyes of faith. With what love, then, does God behold your afflicted hearts raised towards him, offering him your sufferings, testifying to him that you desire only the perfect accomplishment of his holy will, adoring him in union with his eternal Word, who shows that he does not wish to enter into life but through suffering and humiliation.

Joseph and Mary are united to God, who is in their company, and they can already repeat those words which St. John was afterwards to write of him: *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.** They understand how it was to be that he should be unknown and despised, and they esteem themselves happy to be with him. They adore him, inviting all mankind to be like him, by resignation, under suffering, and by the practice of humility. They thank him for having chosen them to be the first to tread that path so rich in merits.

APPLICATION.

What lessons for us, who so often look at our trials merely from a natural point of view; for us, who cannot suffer the most just reproaches, and who sometimes lose our peace of mind in consequence of a charitable remark made to us! What a condemnation of our discontent, and murmurs in presence of the few privations we have to endure!

We complain of having to experience the effects of poverty. Ah! how differently would we act if we considered Joseph and Mary at Bethlehem, without shelter, without means, the objects of contempt and refusal, and how happy they would have considered themselves to be as well circumstanced as we are—we, poor sinners, whom God treats, as to temporal matters, with far more kindness than he did his most holy children.

* St. John i. 10, 11.

PRAYER.

I submit myself, O my God! with total abandonment to the ordinances of your will in my regard. Try me in the way that will be pleasing to you. Grant me your grace in superabundance, so that, in my trials, I may glorify you by my perfect resignation. I ask you this through the intercession of the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph, whose true imitator I desire to be through the whole course of my life.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Mary arriving at Bethlehem; let us see them worn down by fatigue....

They apply to their acquaintances, who refuse to receive them. They knock at the doors of the inns. They are told that there is no room....What grief St. Joseph experiences!....Let us measure it by the affection and esteem he entertains for Mary, for whom he is unable to procure even a shelter.

But let us not limit ourselves to a simple contemplation of the intense sufferings of Joseph and Mary. Let us make such reflections on them as the subject naturally suggests.

Let us not imitate the inhabitants of Bethlehem. Let us be full of compassion for our neighbor. Let us see him in Joseph and Mary in suffering.

Let us pity those who close the door of their hearts to Joseph and Mary, through whom Jesus Christ would come to them, and let us, above all, keep ourselves from imitating them.

Let us train our pupils in a true devotion towards the

most holy Virgin and her glorious spouse, for that devotion will be to them the source of the greatest blessings, and the pledge of their perseverance....

Joseph and Mary have to endure great privations, to experience humiliating refusals; nevertheless, they are perfectly resigned: what a lesson to us, who are so prone to impatience, perhaps even to murmuring.

FRUITS.—To be, from motives of faith, resigned in adversity; to have ourselves, and to inspire our pupils with, devotion to the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph.

NINTH MEDITATION.

JOSEPH IN THE STABLE AT BETHLEHEM.

"Joseph adores the Infant Jesus laid upon straw."
—(Response *Quicumque.*)

CONSIDERATION.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Mary refused admittance to all the inns in Bethlehem, and obliged to go forth from that inhospitable city. Night falls, and obliges them to find some shelter against its severities. They search for this for a long time, and at last meet with an abandoned cave, a poor stable, and there, in an abandoned spot, open to all the inclemency of the season, two persons most eminent for sanctity, and dearest to the heart of God, find shelter! They enter there without complaining of the men that have rejected them, without allowing themselves to entertain any resentment against them, but, on the other hand, thanking God who calls them to walk in the way of humiliations.

The Lord tries those who profess to belong to him; but then what graces has he in store for them in reward of their fidelity and courage in his service! Let us judge of this by his conduct towards Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. What a favor he has prepared for them in that poor abode, so contemptible in the eyes of men, and which is about to become the first temple of the new law!

Let us consider these two angelic beings lost in holy contemplation of the mystery that is about to be accomplished. Night is half way in its course. The hour appointed for the birth of the Messiah has come. On a sudden, a heavenly light illumines the place where they are prostrate in prayer. The divine Infant, the Child of promise, the Expectation of Israel, the Desired of all nations, appears before their eyes. Mary, always a virgin and undefiled, receives into her arms the God who has made himself her son. She adores him with the most unutterable sentiments of respect, humility, tenderness, love, and happiness.

St. Joseph kneels in prayer beside the most holy Virgin; like her, he contemplates the Infant-God; with her, he adores Him in sentiments of unutterable joy. No, no, we could not comprehend what passed in his heart! The seraphim alone could express in their language what were the transports of his love. O Joseph, O holy patriarch, who appeared so abject in the eyes of men! you are, after Mary, more honored than the angels themselves: the Word of God makes you enjoy his adorable presence, and commits himself to your care. The holy Virgin has placed her divine Son in your arms. You hold there the Lamb offered up since the beginning of the world, and, first priest of the new law, you offer him up to Heaven, a pure oblation for the salvation of mankind.

What sentiments crowded together in your soul when you caught the first look of Jesus, resting on his holy Mother and on you, and when you said to yourself: "Yes, that Child whom I gaze on with so much love, and whom I cover with kisses, that Child is my

God, my Saviour, and the blessed spirits at this moment adore him as they come in crowds into this poor stable to present him their homage as their sovereign King."

Ah! what did Joseph then think of the privations that he had endured? What did he care then for the contempt of men, or for having had to endure hunger, cold, and weariness?....He is overwhelmed with joy. The moment he had so long wished for is at last come. Happier than Abraham, than David, than the prophets, he carries in his arms, he sees, he presses to his heart Him, who was the sole object of their hopes.

Let us congratulate St. Joseph on his happiness, and let us here make a reflection that has more direct relation to ourselves. One day, we firmly hope, we shall have the happiness of beholding Jesus Christ in his glory: what shall we then think of the sufferings and afflictions of this life?

How will the trials appear to us then that we may have had to undergo in this land of misery? Shall we even remember then, when, like St. Joseph, the contemplation of the Beloved of our hearts will absorb all our thoughts, and exhaust all the powers of our souls?

Let us judge now of our sufferings, as we shall judge of them then; let us not even occupy our minds with them. Above the sentiments that naturally arise from them, let us build up the hope that God will recompense our sacrifices by allowing us to enjoy the presence of his Incarnate Word shining with all the splendor of his divinity.

Courage and confidence! Let us remember that sufferings have an end, and that he who, in imitation of St. Joseph, endures them with faith, and resignation to the will of God, is, even in this life, abundantly recompensed.

But let us consider in St. Joseph not merely the happiness with which his soul overflows; let us reflect on his interior dispositions, so as to enter well into the spirit of the subject we are meditating.

The first sentiment to which St. Joseph surrenders his whole soul is that of adoration. He offers a perfect homage of submission to God, who veils his divine majesty under the exterior of weakness and poverty. He humbles himself in his presence, and glorifies him in his greatness and his omnipotence. Although Jesus shows himself but as a poor child, subject to all the infirmities of our nature, he recognizes in him the eternal Wisdom, who, by a word, drew heaven and earth out of nothing.

The second sentiment, which it is important we should remark in St. Joseph, is that of his love for Jesus. Oh how ardent it was! Here, indeed, words are powerless to express the reality, to tell what passed in the heart of that holy patriarch at that solemn hour of the birth of the Messiah—at that moment for which the world had been preparing for four thousand years. How can an idea be given of the transports of his soul towards Jesus at that moment when, with his eyes, he beholds the Incarnate Word—when he sees God humbling himself, annihilating himself to save the world!

The third sentiment to be remarked in St. Joseph,

and that which is a consequence of love and adoration, is that of generosity, of devotedness to the service of Jesus. Let us see him prostrate in prayer, with Mary, before the crib where the Infant God is laid upon a little straw. With what earnestness does he offer himself to that divine Saviour, to live and to labor only for him!

"To you," does he say, "to you, O my God! I give my body and my soul; to you I give my time, my toil, my liberty, my life. To you I give all that is in my power, and I feel that I can do much, because my soul finds in you the source of unwonted vigor and the most undaunted courage."

APPLICATION.

In union with St. Joseph, let us adore the Son of God becoming man to save us. Let us adore him in the crib, and let this intention guide us when we recite the prayers prescribed by rule, that have reference to the divine Infancy.

Let us adore him in the person of the children entrusted to us, and who represent him in our regard. Let us adore him, above all, in the sacrament of his love, by which we are in his adorable presence as truly as Joseph was in the stable of Bethlehem.

Let us love the Infant God; but let us love him with that love with which St. Joseph loved him—with that sincere, ardent, constant, generous love, which desires only labor and sacrifices, which has no other ambition than to sacrifice itself, which is only afraid of not doing enough for Jesus, and meriting to be united with him in heaven.

PRAYER.

O holy Infant Jesus, whom I behold laid upon straw in the poor stable in which you wished to be born! I adore you, in union with St. Joseph, your adopted father; like him, I recognize you as my God, and, like him, while contemplating your loveliness, I open my heart to unutterable sentiments of love, admiration, joy, and gratitude.

Grant me, I beseech you, by his intercession, that these sentiments may always remain in my heart, and that they may produce there a great zeal for your glory, and an unlimited devotion to your service.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us contemplate Joseph and Mary leaving Bethlehem, where no one wished to give them hospitality..... wandering about in the fields....stopping before a poor stable....entering there to pass the night....

What trials Providence had ordained for them!

Yes, God tries his friends; but he also favors them sometimes by many sweet consolations. Let us judge of them by those, that awaited St. Joseph in the stable to which they retired.

What passes in his heart, when the Infant God is presented to him by the most holy Virgin, his Mother!.... when he contemplates him and adores him!....

Ah! what to him, at that moment, are the trials he had undergone!....He does not even remember them, absorbed as he is in the contemplation of the divine Messiah....

Let us congratulate St. Joseph on the happiness with which God rewards his fidelity....

In union with him, let us adore the Infant Jesus....let us love him, and devote ourselves to his glory.

Adoration, love, devotion to God, who became a child for us, ought to be, as it were, the very foundation of our hearts, and to determine all the acts of our life.

Fruits.—To recite the offerings to the divine Childhood with great piety; to be very zealous for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

TENTH MEDITATION.

INTERIOR DISPOSITIONS OF ST. JOSEPH, ON OCCASION OF THE ADORATION OF JESUS BY THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM.

"I bring you good tidings of great joy."—St. Luke ii. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

THE birth of our Saviour is a subject for great joy. It was such to the shepherds to whom the angel announced it by the words we have quoted; such also it was to Joseph and Mary; and such it is to all Christians.

Our divine Saviour, who was afterwards to teach that maxim so often proposed to us for meditation, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,** wished that it should previously receive its fulfilment. It was from among the poor and simple he chose his most holy Mother, whom all generations should call blessed, and his adopted father, who shares the glory and happiness of that holy Virgin. They are also poor and simple people whom he calls to his crib to be, after them, his first adorers, and to taste the happiness of enjoying his adorable presence.

Let us consider the shepherds keeping watch over their flocks not far from Bethlehem. On a sudden the angel of the Lord appears to them, a divine

* St. Matt. v. 3.

brightness surrounds them, and all are seized with great fear. But the angel reassures them: *Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.* *

Oh what reflections this consoling subject suggests to us! How happy are those shepherds to whom the angel announces the good tidings! What motives they have for confidence, since what is revealed to them is a subject of the greatest joy! Are not their hearts filled with delight, when they are surrounded by a divine brightness, and their ears listen to the song of the heavenly spirits? It is true, then, that the maxim may be applied to them: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* But with still more reason may this be said, if we consider the sequel of the Gospel narrative.

The shepherds behold the angel ascending to heaven, and when they have disappeared, they say one to another: *Let us go over to Bethlehem; and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us.* Let us consider them, then, going in all haste, and stopping before the poor stable where the Infant God was then the object of the adoration and care of his most holy Mother and nursing father.

Let us behold St. Joseph going to meet them,

* St. Luke ii. 10–15.

listening to their request, introducing them to the crib, and showing them there the Infant Jesus, laid upon straw, and wrapped in swaddling clothes. Ah! what passes then in their hearts! what joy penetrates their souls when they recognize by the signs given them by the angel that this infant is God, the Saviour, the Christ. He who is come to bring redemption to captives, to dry the tears of the wretched, and to fulfil the promises of divine mercy!

The poorer they see him, the more they feel admiration, confidence, and love increase in their hearts. Let us contemplate them adoring, in union with Joseph and Mary, the holy Infant who makes all their happiness, and recognizing the truth of what the angel had said of him. Let us think of the ineffable consolations they experience, and let us ask ourselves if the maxim of the divine Master is not likewise fulfilled in them: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

But does not that maxim receive, even at that moment, its perfect accomplishment in St. Joseph? Who will tell us what passes in his heart during the adoration of the shepherds? Instructed like them by the voice of an angel, he adores, like them, in the Infant Jesus the Most High God, the Messiah promised to the earth.

St. Joseph desires only the glory of Jesus Christ. What a satisfaction he experiences when he beholds the shepherds glorify him by their homage, celebrate his greatness, testify that they will publish what is the subject of their admiration. That on their return they will tell what they have heard and seen, and that thus they will make that divine Saviour, for whom

they experience in their hearts so ardent a love, known, and loved by the children of Israel!

Joseph sees with admiration that it is the poor whom the angels invite to be the first courtiers of the sovereign King. He understands that the divine Master is come to teach the world a contempt of riches, and love of poverty. He, that sovereign Lord having made him poor, since poverty was a condition for the singular privileges with which he was favored.

O glorious Joseph, how worthy you are of our congratulations! Doubtless, the shepherds praised and thanked you, after having adored Jesus and honored his most holy Mother; no doubt they said to you: "You are happy, O Joseph! you whom God has chosen among all the descendants of Israel to entrust to you this Son of David, who is the Desired of nations, and by whom true liberty will be given to us. Bless the Lord, since he has chosen you from amongst all his children, and will make you enjoy here below, through the whole of your life, that happiness we can enjoy but for a few moments! The angels of heaven said to us: *Peace upon earth to men of good will.* May it then be yours, O Joseph! who has merited by your virtues that God should select you as his representative with his adorable Son."

And we, Christian souls, who meditate on these wonders, shall we not offer our congratulations to St. Joseph, whose happiness appears so much superior to that of the shepherds? Yes, let us bless this just man so privileged, and let us celebrate the glory with which God rewards his merits.

APPLICATION.

To imitate St. Joseph, and enter into the spirit of the mystery we contemplate, let us conceive the greatest esteem for poverty, remembering that maxim of the Gospel, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*—a maxim of which we have seen the accomplishment in the person of the shepherds of Bethlehem, and still more in that of the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph. Yes, let us esteem and honor poverty, since Jesus has so much honored it.

Let us make the interests of that divine Saviour our dearest interests. Let us devote ourselves with true zeal to make him known and loved by our pupils. Providence has sent them to us, that, in imitation of Joseph introducing the shepherds into the stable of Bethlehem, and showing Jesus to them, we may show him to them in the narrative of his life on earth, in the person of their neighbor, and, above all, in the holy Eucharist. There he resides as truly as he was in the crib of Bethlehem, and where the sacramental species that conceal him from our eyes are but the swaddling clothes that enfold him, to try our faith.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, you who are all-powerful with Jesus! deign, I beseech you, to present me to him, as you presented the shepherds of Bethlehem. Obtain for me that, like you and them, I may pay him a true homage, and that henceforth all my words, and all my actions, may have no other end than his glory and my own eternal salvation.

RÉSUMÉ.

God wishes that from, the time of the birth of his adorable Son, that maxim should receive its fulfilment: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Thus Joseph and Mary are poor.....Thus, also, it is poor and simple people who are invited to be his first adorers, after them.

Let us recall to mind what the Gospel says of the apparition of the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem....their terror....the words by which he gives them courage.... the celestial harmony that charms their ears....Oh what joy they experience!

But how their happiness goes on increasing!....Let us see them introduced by St. Joseph to the crib wherein is the Infant God....Let us contemplate them adoring him in union with Joseph and Mary....Let us think of what passes in their hearts, and say again: *Blessed are the poor.*

Let us consider that this maxim received its fulfilment in St. Joseph. What joy the adoration of the shepherds causes him who has no other desire than the glory of Jesus!....

Joseph understands also the doctrine which the divine Word has come to teach men regarding poverty; he blesses Providence for having made him poor, since that was a condition for the privileges he enjoys.

Let us represent to ourselves the shepherds, thanking him, and judge if there was ever more reason to repeat that holy maxim: *Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven....*

FRUITS.—To glorify St. Joseph by all the means in our power; to be very zealous in making Jesus Christ known, loved, and adored.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION.

INTERIOR DISPOSITIONS OF ST. JOSEPH, ON OCCASION OF THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

"Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and we are come to adore him."—St. Matt. ii. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

THE shepherds who came to adore the Infant God in the stable of Bethlehem, represented the poor and the simple; but Jesus Christ, being the Saviour of the whole human race, should also receive, at his birth, the homage of the learned and rich of this world. He should be adored at first by persons belonging to the Jewish race, the depositary of the promises, but afterwards by representatives of the Gentiles.

Behold the reason why the Magi, when struck by the appearance of a new star, recollect that Balaam had spoken of it as being the signal of the coming of the Redeemer of the world. Urged inwardly by the grace of Him whose birth it manifests to them, they consider it their duty to go and offer him the homage of their adoration.

Let us behold them, guided by this marvellous star, going at first to Jerusalem, and afterwards directing their steps to Bethlehem, the city pointed out by the prophets as the birthplace of the Messiah.

Let us now turn our eyes to St. Joseph; let us con-

template that holy patriarch receiving these holy and distinguished strangers, and hearing them address to him this question: "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east.* We have followed it, and it has stood over this place."

What passes in his soul when he learns the object of the visit of these princes, who represent the whole Gentile people? St. Joseph acts towards them as towards the shepherds: he introduces them into the house, *where they find the Child with Mary his Mother.** He shows them Him whom they are come so far to seek, who is so justly called the Desired of nations, who was to make one people out of all tribes and nations—the Saviour God, who was to die for the redemption of the world, and who, on the day of his sacrifice, was to have written over his head in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin that very title of *King of the Jews*, under which the Magi speak of him at that time.

Let us contemplate them prostrating themselves before the Infant Jesus; adoring him, in union with the most holy Virgin and St. Joseph; offering him gold as to their king, incense as to their God, myrrh as to their Saviour.

Oh what must have been the consolations of St. Joseph! for all here is a subject of the greatest joy to him—the piety of the Magi, the happiness of Mary, the graces which Heaven bestows upon himself, and still more the glory which is procured to Jesus Christ.

The Magi are to Joseph a subject of joy, at the same time that their offerings are to him a motive for gratitude. What a consoling spectacle for him to see the

* St. Matt. ii. 11.

faith and piety of those kings who, forgetting their pomp and greatness, prostrate themselves in all humility before the Infant Jesus—before this King, so different from others, who has only a stable for his palace, and poor swaddling clothes for his raiment.

St. Joseph rejoiced on the occasion of the adoration of Jesus by the shepherds of Bethlehem. Now there are here the same motives, and even greater; for the adoration of the Magi, who have come so far and appear to have left so much, seems to testify a more lively faith, a more ardent love, and a more devoted zeal. He understands that their presents attract to them the most abundant graces of Heaven. He sees Mary thank them with a look full of sweetness. He is eager to testify his gratitude to them, because, coming to the aid of his poverty, they furnish him, by these gifts of their piety, with the means of procuring for the Infant God what is necessary for him.

St. Joseph feels great joy because of that which Mary experiences, who sees the Magi adore her divine Son, and who then blesses God and repeats inwardly these words of her sacred canticle: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

He unites with her in blessing God, who heaps his favors upon him. He thanks him for the prerogatives he enjoys, and which are recalled to his mind by the heavenly favors accorded to the Magi. God spoke to them by a star, but to him, by an angel. He whom they have come so far to see once and adore, is his adopted son, with whom he is always—whom his eyes can behold every instant, whom he can take in his

arms and clasp to his bosom. How much more worthy of envy is his condition than that of these happy strangers.

But that, however, is not the principal cause of the joy that fills his heart: that cause is in Jesus Christ—it is in the great work of mercy which that divine Saviour begins to accomplish.

Joseph sees in the Magi the whole of the Gentiles called to the faith. He blesses the divine goodness which wishes that salvation should be offered to all men, without distinction of descent or nationality. What a source of consolation to him! Jesus, the adorable Infant who is the object of his care and love, is known and glorified by the Magi. He will be also by those to whom these holy persons will announce him; then, by a great number from all countries, and finally, by the whole world!

Joseph sees this prophecy of Isaias fulfilled: *Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about and see: all these are gathered together, they are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee.**

* Isaias lx. 1–6.

APPLICATION.

Let us congratulate St. Joseph on the prerogatives with which God so honored him, and on the happiness he experienced on occasion of the adoration of the Magi. Let us congratulate him, above all, on his eminent virtues, by which he made himself worthy of the favors of Heaven.

The Magi offer Jesus their symbolical gifts, but the reality is found better in the soul of Joseph than in their souls, although so pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, for indeed, after Mary, no one has ever had more than Joseph of the pure gold of charity, the sweet incense of prayer, the precious myrrh of mortification. No one has more testified by his love, by his prayers, and by his devotedness that he recognized Jesus for his King, his God, his Saviour.

Like Joseph, let us give ourselves up to none but pure and holy joys. Let us rejoice in the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, in the propagation of the faith, in the good that is wrought either by ourselves or others.

Let the remembrance of the joy of Joseph, on occasion of the adoration of the Magi, inspire in us a great zeal for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us make that amiable Redeemer of the world known and loved. Let us be the star that leads faithful adorers to the Infant Jesus, and then we shall, in an especial manner, please St. Joseph and secure his protection, by which we shall obtain all graces, and particularly final perseverance.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who hast experienced so many interior consolations through the adoration of Jesus by the Magi! obtain for us that we may be animated by a great zeal for the glory of thy adopted Son, so that, bringing adorers to him, we may be pleasing to thee by our conduct, and may thus secure thy protection, by which all good things in the order of grace will come to us.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider the Magi answering the call of God, and coming to adore the Infant Jesus.

Let us represent to ourselves St. Joseph introducing them to the divine Infant and his most holy Mother....

Let us observe these pious strangers adoring, in union with Mary and Joseph, the new King of the Jews..... offering him gold, incense, and myrrh....

Let us think on the interior dispositions of St. Joseph: let us dwell in particular on the joy which he experiences, and which has for its object:

1*st.* The faith and piety of the Magi.... 2*d.* The joy that fills the heart of the most holy Virgin.... 3*d.* The graces which Heaven has bestowed on himself, and which are more precious than those with which the Magi were favored.... 4*th.* The glory procured to Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is established in this world.

Joseph sees in the Magi the first fruits of the Gentiles; he sees all nations being converted to the Lord, and receiving the salvation which Jesus comes to bring upon earth.

FRUITS.—To take part in the joy of St. Joseph; like him, to rejoice only in the establishment and strengthening of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

TWELFTH MEDITATION.

JESUS IS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE.

"They carried him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord."
St. Luke ii. 22.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us consider the interior dispositions of St. Joseph in the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple. They will afford us most useful instruction, because they will make us appreciate still more the effects of grace in our glorious patron, and will teach us what we should do to be his true imitators.

Let us remark, first of all, the exact obedience of St. Joseph; for he proves himself a zealous observer of the law, although he knew that it did not oblige him to present the supreme Lawgiver himself in the Temple. He can say to the Jews: "There is some one here greater than the Temple, and superior to the law;" and yet he thinks only of doing in regard to Jesus, what the law prescribes for other infants. Therefore, the Gospel makes us remark this obedience of Joseph and Mary, by observing four times in the same chapter that they acted conformably to the law of the Lord.

Let us remark, secondly, the great piety of St. Joseph. It is in this respect, above all, that we should consider him to-day. The time has come to

carry the Infant Jesus to Jerusalem, to present him to God the Father. What passes, then, in the soul of St. Joseph at the thought of the great act of religion he is about to perform?

He is about to present the Infant to the Lord! But that Child is the Son of God. The offering he is about to make of him will then be worthy of the Lord. There will be a pure oblation at Jerusalem—a holocaust that will satisfy the Most High, and render him infinite homage.

Joseph is going to present the Child to the Lord! But that Child is the Victim of our reconciliation, the Lamb offered up from the beginning of the world. With what holy joy is Joseph then about to offer him. Does he not already see the effects of the divine mercy spread over the world, pardon come down from heaven, and sinful humanity find grace before the God whom it had offended?

Joseph is about to present the Child to the Lord! But that Child is the Mediator by whom earth returns thanks to Heaven, and begs of God the gifts of his providence. With what sentiments is not his soul penetrated at that moment, when he considers that through Jesus thanks worthy of the infinite goodness of the Lord are about to rise to his throne, and with them an all-powerful prayer that will cause the most abundant and most precious graces to rain down upon men!

Joseph understands all the excellence of the offering that Jesus is about to make of himself to his heavenly Father, and he unites himself with the adorable Victim. He directs his steps towards Jerusalem, iden-

tifying himself as much as he can with the divine Infant that he carries in his arms. He says to him, "Yes I wish, O my divine Saviour! as does your most holy Mother, to make but one with you; offer up likewise with your own divine Person all those whom you call to the knowledge of your holy name; offer up all mankind, for you are he through whom alone men can find grace before God."

St. Joseph, uniting himself to Jesus, enters into conformity of dispositions with the divine Victim. His soul is penetrated with sentiments of the most respectful adoration towards God; the most lively gratitude for his numberless favors, the most profound grief for the offence sin has inflicted on his divine Majesty, and the greatest fervor in soliciting his graces.

But these dispositions are still more perfect in him during the ceremony of presentation. Who will tell us the fervor and joy of his soul at that moment when he sees the prophecy fulfilled that foretold that the Temple built on the return from captivity would surpass in glory that of Solomon,* when these words of Malachias should be realized. "*Behold I send my Angel, and he shall prepare the way from before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the Angel of the testament whom you desire, shall come to his temple.* †

It was, then, a subject of ineffable joy to St. Joseph, which was still more increased by the glory which the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna pay to Jesus. Nothing, in truth, caused him more consolation than to see Jesus known and glorified; how much, then,

* Aggeus ii. 10. † Malac. iii. 1.

must he have experienced when he saw the holy aged Simeon take the divine Child in his arms, and bless God while saying: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people: a light to the revelation of the gentiles, and the glory of thy people of Israel.** What sentiments must have crowded in his heart when he heard Simeon bless him, and the most holy Virgin, and congratulate him on having been chosen to live in the adorable company of Him whose company he had so much desired; or when he witnessed the coming of the prophetess Anna to the Temple, who spoke of the Infant God *to all that looked for the redemption of Israel!*

God the Father glorified by Jesus Christ, and he glorified by Simeon and Anna, and in their person by all the people of Israel. Behold what, above all, filled the heart of St. Joseph with delight! Well might he exclaim, and with more reason than holy Simeon: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord....in peace.* But no, such is not his language. He thinks in his joy, that he has a great mission to fulfil, and the sentiment that predominates above all others in him is that of perfect conformity to the designs of Providence. Uniting himself anew to the adorable Victim, he offers himself to God to fulfil all the duties of the great charge entrusted to him.

APPLICATION.

What useful instructions the subject we are meditating on offers us!

* St. Luke ii. 29–32.

We assist every day at the Sacrifice of the Mass, at the offering which our adorable Saviour makes of himself to God. But do we assist thereat with the interior dispositions we have remarked in St. Joseph when offering Jesus to his heavenly Father? Are we then penetrated with sentiments of adoration, gratitude, repentance, and fervor? Are we doing all that is possible for us to excite them in our souls? Do we unite ourselves to the great Victim in offering ourselves to God, with all that belongs to us? Oh how profitable our assistance at the holy sacrifice will then be, and what interior consolations God will make us then enjoy!

In imitation of St. Joseph, let us make all our joy to consist in what glorifies Jesus Christ. Let us thank Heaven when we see that adorable Saviour known and loved by men. Let us take part in an especial manner in what is done for that end in our Institute. Let us consider the good that is done there, and let that be a motive to make us rejoice in God. Let us take pleasure in this thought, that our Brothers, fulfilling the same mission as the aged Simeon and Anna, speak of the Infant God to a great number of Christian youths, whom they thus train to adore, love, and serve him.

Let us excite in our hearts the sentiments of piety and gratitude we have considered in St. Joseph; let us testify by our conduct that they are the moving spring of our actions. Then we too shall merit, in company with St. Joseph and the aged Simeon, to see Him who is the true Light, and the sight of whom makes the supreme happiness of the elect.

PRAYER.

I beseech you, O Jesus, adorable Victim of my salvation! to make me partaker of the interior dispositions of St. Joseph, who was always so pure and pleasing in your eyes. Grant that my heart may be inflamed like his with the fire of your divine charity, so that I may merit to be presented by Mary and him in the holy temple of your glory.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider the virtues and interior dispositions of St. Joseph in the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple....

Let us remark in him, first, his obedience to the law of the Lord....

Let us remark in him, next, his union of sentiments with the adorable Victim he offers to God....

Joseph considers Jesus as the true adorer of the eternal Father....as rendering to his infinite goodness a worthy homage of gratitude....as expiating the sins of all mankind....as praying for men, and deserving to be heard in all his prayers....

Joseph unites himself to Jesus, and excites in his heart the same sentiments as those which are in the heart of the divine Infant....

Let us contemplate Joseph carrying the Infant Jesus, and entering with Mary into the Temple of Jerusalem. What joy he experiences at that moment when the Son of God comes to honor that holy structure, and to make it more glorious than was the Temple of Solomon! when the great Victim, prefigured by all the victims of the old law, offers himself to the Most High God!....

Let us consider how his joy is increased through the glory rendered to Jesus by the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna.

FRUITS.—To be filled, when assisting at the holy sacrifice, by sentiments of adoration, gratitude, repentance and piety; to rejoice in the good done in the Church.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH IS ORDERED TO GO INTO EGYPT.

"An Angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt; and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child, to destroy him."—Matt. ii. 13.

CONSIDERATION.

Of all the actions that the life of St. Joseph presents to our consideration, this is the one in which that obedience which was, as it were, the very foundation of his soul is most visible. Let us, then, in the course of this meditation, place ourselves chiefly at that point of view, and consider that God greatly honors St. Joseph by the orders he transmits to him; and that St. Joseph worthily glorifies God by the manner in which he executes them.

The command which St. Joseph received is highly honorable to him under all respects, and, in the first place, because of its origin, for it is an angel who gives it to him on the part of God himself. Who would not think it an honor to be thus in immediate relation with a prince of the heavenly court, and to receive, in so simple a manner, an intimation of the will of the Most High?

That order is equally honorable to Joseph because of its object: *Arise*, said the angel to him, *and take the*

child and his mother, and fly into Egypt. But what do those words mean but this: "The Lord your God entrusts to you, O Joseph, all that he holds most dear: his adorable Son, and the Virgin, his most holy Mother. He has chosen you to represent him, to personify his providence in regard to both. A danger threatens the Child, and it is to your devotedness and prudence the Most High has counted to entrust him; it is to you he trusts to preserve the life of the divine Saviour, and defeat the projects of hell." What a mark of confidence God has thus given to St. Joseph, and what can be conceived more glorious to him!

That command is honorable to Joseph because of the authority it recognizes in him over Mary and Jesus; for it establishes him head of the Holy Family, and thus presents him to us as the man most worthy of respect that ever was or will be.

That command is also honorable to him because of the difficulties its execution presents. It is question of a dangerous and painful journey, and for which Joseph appears to have had no resources at his disposal. Nevertheless the order is given to him. In this there is true homage paid to his virtue. Heroism is commanded only to great souls. It is from those who have generous hearts that the Lord asks great sacrifices. The more contrary to nature is the order given, the more does he testify his esteem for them by giving it. Viewed in this respect, it is evident that God greatly honored St. Joseph, and that by intimating to him in such simple terms, *Take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt*, he showed that he recognized him as a man in whom he placed confidence, whose will was

perfectly conformable to his own, and to whom it was sufficient to reveal his adorable designs to secure on his part the devotion of his whole soul to their accomplishment.

But if God honors his friends by ordering them to do things difficult of accomplishment, the friends of God give him glory, in their turn, by accomplishing them with all the perfection possible for them.

That is, in truth, what we remark in St. Joseph. He has therefore testified by this that he was the true servant of the Most High, worthy of the affection of the Lord. God says to him in effect what Jesus Christ was to say on the night before his death: "If you love me, do what I command you;" and St. Joseph answers him: "I am happy to do what you command me, because I have an extreme desire of testifying to you that I love you."

Let us admire these interior dispositions of St. Joseph, and remark the character of the act by which they are made manifest. Let us consider how that great servant of God practices obedience, which, of all virtues, seems the one most calculated to glorify the sovereign Master.

St. Joseph obeys, first, from faith, and from a motive of religion. He proposes to himself only to do the will of God, who has spoken to him by his heavenly messenger; and, in humility of heart, he adores the designs of providence.

St. Joseph obeys, secondly, with simplicity. He was told to go to Egypt with the Child Jesus and his most holy Mother. This was a very great trial. How many observations might he not have offered! The length

and difficulties of the road, the weakness of the most holy Virgin, and still more of the Child. The want of means and of protection. The ease with which Providence could disconcert the designs of Herod in any other way.....But Joseph suffers himself to make no observation; he takes care not to allow his thoughts to dwell on any objection showing either that he does not recognize God as the author of the command, or that could seem to accuse him of being wanting in wisdom. Humble and diffident of his own knowledge, he knows only how to obey. He does not even inquire as to the time of his return to his own country. He has but one thought—how to fulfil the orders given him without any delay.

St. Joseph obeys, thirdly, with promptitude. It is question of a great enterprise, of a distant journey, and a long sojourn in a foreign country. Preparations, therefore, appeared to be necessary, and seemed to authorize a delay in the execution of the order given. But that faithful servant of God is not instigated by human prudence to act contrary to the designs of his sovereign Master. The angel had said to him, *Arise;* he had shown him that it was necessary to do at once what was ordered, and he obeyed on the instant.

St. Joseph obeyed, fourthly, with the most perfect interior dispositions, and, among others, with fervor and generosity, and an unlimited confidence in Providence—a confidence which is a true act of adoration, a perfect homage rendered to the divine goodness.

Persuaded that all ends in the greatest advantage to those who love God and serve him faithfully, St. Joseph abandons himself to the guidance of that good

Master. He hopes, not only that he will never abandon him, but that he will assist him the more, that he is deprived of all human succor.

APPLICATION.

What practical consequences naturally follow from the subject on which we are meditating. They might form a complete code of religious perfection. But let us limit ourselves to the most important.

In imitation of the saints, and of St. Joseph in particular, let us consider it an honor to be tried by God. Let us look upon it as a mark of confidence when we are commanded anything difficult and painful to nature. Let us remember that the exercise of obedience is commanded only of such souls as wish to belong wholly to God, and that it is to them a source of the greatest merits.

Let us glorify God, and honor our state by perfect obedience; let us act in such a way that this virtue may be in us as in St. Joseph—Christian and religious, simple, prompt, and entire.

Let us leave ourselves, with the greatest confidence, in the hands of divine Providence. Let us think only of doing the work of God, and let us be assured that God will do our work. Let us devote ourselves to his glory, and cast all our iniquities into the bosom of his infinite goodness.

Let us be vigilant and full of zeal in the exercise of our employment. The subject on which we meditate offers us an entirely special motive for this. Is it not to us, Brothers of the Christian Schools, that it is said:

"Arise, take the Child and his Mother, and save him from the fury of Herod?" Our pupils run great dangers, and, to avert them, they have only, for the most part, the care we bring to the irreligious education. Ah! must we, at thought of this, not feel inflamed with the most ardent zeal?

Let us, in all circumstances, walk in the footsteps of St. Joseph. Let us be a subject of joy to him, by the imitation of his virtues. By this means we shall secure his all-powerful protection, and through it, success with our pupils, and still more our own success in the great work of our sanctification.

PRAYER.

O Joseph! when shall I merit, by the imitation of your virtues, to be counted in the number of the true servants of God? Obtain for me, I beseech you, the singular favor of being, like you, perfectly submissive to God and full of confidence in his goodness, so that I may make myself worthy to share your glory, and that of the most holy Virgin, with whom you devoted yourself, without reserve, to that care which the divine Infancy of my adorable Saviour required.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us recall to mind the order given to St. Joseph by an angel, who said to him, during his sleep. *Arise, and take the child and his mother, and fly into Egypt.*

Let us consider how honorable that command is for St. Joseph. It is a heavenly spirit that transmits it to him;....it has reference to Jesus and Mary;....its object

is to save the Infant God from the fury of Herod ;.....it presents difficulties, but that proves the esteem God had for the virtue of his servant.

Let us consider, finally, how Joseph glorifies God, whom he obeys : 1*st*, from motives of faith and religion ; 2*dly*, with simplicity ; 3*dly*, with promptitude ; 4*thly*, with confidence in his goodness.

He does not give way to anxiety ; he thinks only of doing the work of God, in whose bosom he casts all his solicitude....

Let us often think of the obedience of St. Joseph, and his confidence in God, and let us endeavor to imitate them.

FRUITS.—To esteem the exercise of obedience ; to be zealous for the salvation of our pupils.

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

"I will conduct him thither, and bring him back to thee."
—Tobias v. 15.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us consider the conduct of St. Joseph while fulfilling the order given him to fly into Egypt. We shall find there occasion to admire and glorify that great servant of God, and much to edify us at the sight of his virtues.

We have already remarked with what holy dispositions he received that order; how he accepted it with faith and simplicity, and set immediately about executing it; we have comprehended what glory he rendered to God by an obedience so holy and so exact. Now, these dispositions were found in him not only at the time when the order was given, but during all the time needed to execute it. At each instant of the flight from Judea to Egypt, St. Joseph glorified God by his obedience in as perfect manner as is implied by these words of the holy Gospel: *Who, rising up, took the child and his mother by night, and retired into Egypt.**

St. Joseph, during his journey into Egypt, glorifies God by the practice of many virtues no less sublime

* St. Matt. ii. 14.

than obedience, and especially, first, by his devotedness; secondly, by his courage and resignation; thirdly, by his spirit of faith and charity.

St. Joseph gives proof of a devotedness without limit. Let us admire in what sentiments he accepts the mission entrusted to him. Yes, he says to God, "I receive with joy the order you give me. Your providence has counted on my fidelity; I hope, by your grace, not to fail in what your providence requires of me. Behold me: I will conduct your adorable Son as the angel Raphael conducted the young Tobias; I will not spare myself, considering it always my greatest happiness to sacrifice myself for Jesus."

In these dispositions, Joseph bade adieu to his country, and choosing to be like Jesus Christ, begins his journey to a foreign country. Let us not suppose that it did not cost his heart much thus to leave Judea. Like all true Israelites, he had the greatest love for the land of promise, for Jerusalem, the holy city where was found the only temple in the universe raised to the honor of the true God. No doubt he shed tears at quitting the land of his ancestors; yet he overcame his natural sentiments, and in the depth of his heart considered himself happy at thus showing his perfect devotedness to the work of salvation entrusted to him.

St. Joseph also shows his devotedness by the sacrifice of his position in Judea. It is true, he had little; but that little was much to him, because it was the only thing that assured him the means of subsistence. Now, he generously abandons all, and excepting, perhaps, the tools of his business, he abandons every-

thing to follow Jesus—thus making in advance the sacrifice afterwards made by the Apostles, and for a mission not less difficult than theirs.

Ah! who can say how much Joseph had to suffer in going from Judea into Egypt! He was poor, and had need to find a shelter for every night, and already he had experienced in Bethlehem that inns had no hospitality for poverty, although he was then in his own country.

He was poor, and he had a family to support. Ah! how could he provide for the wants of the Infant Jesus and his most holy Mother? How could he procure and bring them sufficient provisions? Alas! how many times all three suffered hunger and thirst! How many times they found themselves exhausted by fatigue, without having the means to recruit their strength!

Yes, St. Joseph had much to suffer because of his poverty. He had no less to suffer because of the natural difficulties of the road he had to travel. In Judea he was forced to avoid the frequented roads, so as to escape discovery by some of the emissaries of Herod; on leaving Judea, he enters upon the deserts. Imagination is terrified at the idea of a journey in the deserts, made by a single man accompanied by a Virgin, and bearing, in turns with her, the Infant entrusted to their care.

St. Joseph had to suffer not only the privations, fatigues, and dangers personal to himself, but also all the sufferings endured by the Infant Jesus and the most holy Virgin. As head of the Holy Family, he had to suffer every kind of uneasiness. Therefore, he

had need of great courage, of superhuman strength of soul, of heroic patience, of perfect resignation to the designs of Providence, which wished that the Son of God himself should be a prey to sufferings as the Victim of expiation for the sins of men.

Let us admire that sublime resignation of St. Joseph. Let us often recall to mind that he never suffered a murmur to pass his lips, nor even a complaint. That he was content with raising his eyes with faith towards Heaven, which had judged him strong enough for such trials.

But St. Joseph, the model of devotedness, courage, and resignation, is to us a model also of faith and charity.

He looks at everything from a religious point of view. Thus he thinks, while travelling towards Egypt, that he is following the route traversed by Abraham, and later on by the sons of Jacob. He remembers that they were, from a human point of view, in a far less painful position than he. Nevertheless, he hopes to arrive, like them, at the end of his journey, by the protection of divine Providence.

Joseph finds in his love for Jesus a source of strength, courage, even joy, in the midst of his tribulations. Ah! who will give us to understand what passed in his heart, when, during the journey, he was alone with Jesus and Mary? His affection, as well as that of the most holy Virgin, has but one object, Jesus, for whom it is a happiness to make every sacrifice. Now he carries him in his arms; his soul is then under the influence of the strongest love—a love which increases the strength a hundred fold,

allows nothing to seem painful, and even goes so far as to make us look on the most costly sacrifices as occasions to be desired. Mary, in her turn, carries the Infant Jesus, and has for him, in her virginal and maternal heart, all the fire of the most lively affection; but the heart of Joseph makes one only with that of his most holy spouse. Therefore, he is constantly under the influence of his love for Jesus—that is to say, of the most holy, most noble, and most religious sentiment. It is then true that he worthily glorified God during his flight into Egypt, and that he deserves to be proposed to the admiration and imitation of all Christians.

APPLICATION.

In imitation of St. Joseph, let us devote ourselves generously to the work which Providence has entrusted to us. Let us save our pupils from the dangers that threaten us. Let us spare nothing to attain that end—the most noble that our charity can conceive. We have charge of each one of these children. Let us remember the engagement we have contracted on that subject by corresponding to our vocation, and let us fulfil it with an indefatigable zeal.

Let us think that there is nothing wearisome to him that loves; let us, then, draw strength from our love for Jesus, and our union with that adorable Saviour.

Let us support with courage the trials to which we are subject. What are they but precious occasions for manifesting our love for our divine Master. Let us accept them with joy, or, at least, with patience. Let us remember that if in adversity we imitate St.

Joseph, the number and greatness of our sufferings will determine the number and excellence of our merits.

Let us incline our pupils to love patience and resignation. They have to traverse the desert of this life, where so many difficulties are encountered. Let us train them to be imitators of St. Joseph—that is to say, to suffer everything with devotedness and courage, in a spirit of faith and love towards Jesus Christ and his most holy Mother.

PRAYER.

Pray for me, O glorious St. Joseph, that I may imitate your virtues, and especially those that I have meditated on. Obtain for me that I may be perfect in my obedience, a zealous servant of God, a religious filled with the spirit of faith, and wholly penetrated with divine love. I ask it of you by your desire that Jesus may be known, loved, and served by man on earth, and afterwards glorified by them in heaven.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider what virtues appear most in St. Joseph in the flight into Egypt. We shall have reason to honor him, and to instruct ourselves in what we ought to do to be his worthy imitators....

Joseph acted in a spirit of perfect obedience, remaining always submissive to the divine will, and fulfilling it from the purest motives....

Joseph exhibited a devotedness carried even to the most heroic sacrifices. Thus, to obey the order of God,

he generously abandons his country, his relations, all that he possessed....

Joseph gave proof of great courage and perfect resignation....

Joseph acted through the whole journey in a spirit of faith and charity, employing his mind only on the great thoughts of religion, and kindling in his heart sentiments of the most ardent love for Jesus.

FRUITS.—To be patient in trials; to train our pupils to resignation in the sufferings of this life.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION.

SOJOURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT.

"Fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee."—Matt. ii. 13.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us contemplate, in union with the heavenly spirits, the Holy Family during its sojourn in Egypt. Let us consider how St. Joseph endures, in a spirit of faith, the hardships of exile. How he labors with courage for Jesus and Mary, for whom he procures all the consolation in his power. How he prays for the unfortunate people who are plunged in idolatry, and concurs, moreover, by the example of his virtues, in the work of their conversion.

However lively was St. Joseph's faith, however perfect his obedience, he must necessarily have felt most keenly the grief of exile during the long years that he passed in Egypt, and experienced the sentiments of sadness that the Royal Prophet has expressed in these words. *Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion;** or in these others: *Wo is me that my sojourning is prolonged.*†

But he does not stop at that point of the natural view which would have inspired only barren regrets. He rises to the heights of faith. He considers the designs of God, who wished that his adorable Son

* Ps. xxxxi. 1. † Ibid. cxix. 5.

should experience all our miseries, and who associated himself therein with the most holy Virgin.

Joseph sees in the exile that he suffers an image of the exile of the human race in this world, so justly called a valley of tears. He remembers the exile of the people of God in that same land of Egypt where he is detained by the decrees of Providence. He calls to mind all the humiliations and all the sufferings of his fathers and brothers; and with every one of these thoughts of faith, corresponding sentiments of adoration are awakened in his heart.

Let us consider, in the second place, St. Joseph devoting himself for Jesus and Mary. His poverty was great, when he was still living in his own country; how much greater was it in exile, where it was aggravated by isolation. It is evident, says St. Basil, that he must have devoted himself to hard labor to procure the necessaries of life. But he did it with a generous heart, thinking on the Infant God confided to his care, and seeing Mary engaged, on her side, in the labors suited to her condition.

He finds also in Jesus and Mary the source of great strength and heroic courage, which never fail him, and which even lead him to console those for whom he devotes his life.

"Joseph," says the Church,* "consoles the Child in exile." Oh, how those words reveal to us the soul of our holy patron. For himself he accepts the burden of labor; and far from suffering himself to be disheartened by it, he draws from the depths of his heart words of consolation for the Child Jesus and for his

* Response *Quicumque.*

pure and sinless Mother. Let us admire him in this respect, for it is great, it is noble, it is glorious to pour the balm of consolation on suffering souls.

Let us consider, in the third place, St. Joseph in his intercourse with the inhabitants of Egypt, who, as St. Francis of Sales remarks, were then, as formerly, filled with aversion, and contempt for the Jews. These words from Exodus were still applicable to them: *The Egyptians hated the children of Israel, and afflicted them and mocked them.** How much had Joseph then to suffer for them! Did he not see himself at every moment disdained, insulted, refused by those with whom he came in contact. How many troubles were raised up against him in the midst of that people who considered him no better than a slave, and who inherited all the hatred of Pharaoh against the descendants of Jacob!

But all these trials do not shake his courage. He sees himself despised or insulted; but he turns his thoughts and his heart to Jesus and Mary, and immediately feels himself animated to support everything with the greatest resignation. He does more; for, sharing in the sentiments of Him who was afterwards to say upon the cross: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,*† he prays for those who insult him, and makes use of all in his power to do them good.

Let us consider him afflicted even to the depths of his heart at the crimes of that unhappy people, and mourning over the loss of so many souls at the very time when the Saviour of souls was in the midst of

* Exodus i. 13. † Luke xxiii. 34.

them. Let us see him exercise in this behalf the double apostolate of prayer and good example.

Joseph and Mary pass in retirement and prayer the time that they are not obliged to give to labor, and no doubt they solicit from Heaven the grace of salvation for the people in the midst of whom the divine will detained them.

Moreover, they employ themselves in their conversion in the way permitted them. They give them good example, and by their holy life teach them the practices of true religion. Often were they obliged to traverse the streets of those idolatrous cities, but they always edify them by their modesty, by the expression of their countenances, which show that their souls are fixed on heaven, and detached from all the things of earth.

Joseph and Mary thus made the examples of their singular virtues shine upon that people; while they prayed for them, and by that means drew down from Heaven upon the land of Egypt the seed of the most precious graces—a seed that was to be developed later on, and to produce the wonders witnessed in the Thebaid; that is to say, to present to the world those thousands of monks and anchorites who led an angelic life, and are the fairest ornament of the Church of Jesus Christ.

St. Joseph was, then, patient under the trials he underwent from the Egyptian people, zealous for their conversion, attentive to edify them by his conduct, and thus to begin the work of salvation that was to be developed at the time fixed by Providence. In all this he is our worthy model, as well as in his devotion

to Jesus and Mary, and the faith and courage with which he confronted and supported the hardships of exile.

APPLICATION.

We have considered Joseph supporting himself in adversity by the sublime thoughts of faith and the noble sentiments of religion. Let us act in the same way when we are under suffering. Let us, then, lift our minds and hearts to God, and adore the designs of his providence. Let us keep in mind that he wishes what happens to us, and that, if we put no obstacle to it, he will draw from thence his own glory, and make it supremely profitable to us, as regards our salvation.

Let us remember, while meditating on the sufferings of St. Joseph, that he never allowed himself to be disheartened, but that, placing all his confidence in God, he kept his soul in peace, and thought only how to do the work of his providence.

Like St. Joseph, let us labor for Jesus and Mary, and, like him, we shall find in Jesus and Mary, along with peace and contentment, the strength to do the good that God expects of us. We shall pass through earth, edifying all those who shall be witnesses of our actions. He even will rejoice, and, by the intercession of our powerful protector, will open for us, when the exile of this life shall have ended, the gates of heaven.

PRAYER.

I beseech you, O my glorious patron! to protect me in the sufferings and adversities of this life. I beg of

you, by the sufferings of your exile, to obtain for me that I may make a holy use of my sufferings, that I may devote myself to Jesus and Mary; that I may be always a subject of edification to all; so that, having faithfully imitated you, I may, at the hour of my death, hear the angel say to me: "Leave the land of exile; come to the country where God recompenses his elect for their zeal for his glory, and their fidelity in his service."

RÉSUMÉ.

What instructions St. Joseph gives us during the sojourn of the Holy Family in Egypt!

Let us consider him in exile — a painful exile.....a meritorious exile....an exile which he always looks on from the point of view of faith....

He is in exile *with Jesus and Mary;* he undergoes all their sufferings.....he labors to procure them the means of subsistence....he consoles them.....

Jesus and Mary are his whole thought, the end of all his actions.....

St. Joseph is in the midst of a people that despises the Jews; how many rebuffs, insults, injuries even, he has to put up with!

But he does not complain; he gives proof only of the most heroic patience.....

He returns good for evil; in union with Mary, he prays for the conversion of those idolators.....he assists therein by the edification of his conduct.....

Exercising the apostolate of prayer and good example, Mary and Joseph cause that seed of grace to descend upon the land of Egypt which was afterwards to produce so many saints.....

Let us profit by such examples ; let us be patient under trials ; let us devote ourselves with joy to our work from love for Jesus and Mary.....let us pray for those who may have caused us suffering....let us edify every one by our irreproachable conduct.

FRUITS.—To confront difficulties in a spirit of faith ; to persevere in union of heart with Jesus and Mary.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION.

RETURN OF THE HOLY FAMILY.

"I called my son out of Egypt."—Osee xi. 1.

CONSIDERATION.

We know not the exact time that the Holy Family remained in Egypt; we only know that their exile ended at the death of Herod. Then the angel appeared again to Joseph during his sleep, and said to him: *Rise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead who sought the life of the child.**

Let us Christians, who meditate on the virtues of St. Joseph, place ourselves face to face with that perfect model, the study of which is so profitable to us. Let us this day examine in what dispositions of soul he received the order to return to Judea, and how he executed it.

St. Joseph received the command of the angel, first, with faith; second, in a spirit of obedience; third, with a pure joy; and, fourth, with gratitude.

He received it with faith. He considers that it comes from God, through the medium of an angel; that its object is to bring back the Child Jesus to Judea; that it enters into the designs of Providence for the great work of the redemption of mankind; that it makes known the designs of God, who holds all

* St. Matt. ii. 20.

events in his hands, and directs them at his pleasure for the advantage of his elect.

Joseph considers, moreover, that by the execution of that order will be fulfilled the prophecy of Osee: *I called my son out of Egypt;* and that the mission of Jesus Christ will be prepared, which was, in the first place, to begin with the Jewish people, before extending to the Gentiles.

Such are his thoughts, to which the purest sentiments of submission to the will of God—joy and gratitude—find a corresponding echo in his heart.

Joseph had come into Egypt through obedience, and at the simple intimation given to him by an angel during his sleep. He leaves it for the same motive, and in consequence of an order communicated to him in the same way. God always finds in him a most faithful servant, invariably disposed to do his holy will, and whom he could order in the same way what was most painful to nature, and what was most agreeable to it.

Joseph, although perfectly resigned to remain in Egypt all the time that it might please divine Providence, nevertheless receives the order to return to the country of his ancestors with pleasure; but still in his joy he gives glory to God, because his joy proceeds only from supernatural motives.

Joseph feels happy at the order to return to Israel, chiefly because he understands that that order enters into the views of God's mercy, who wishes to hasten the work of the salvation of mankind; because he knows it will be a source of joy to the most holy Virgin, who suffers in that land where the true God

has so few faithful adorers, and because he himself was to see again that promised land which recalled so many prodigies of the power and goodness of God in favor of his nation, and on which the sun of justice was arising that was to enlighten it with divine splendor.

Behold the principal motives for his joy, which inspire in him sentiments of the most lively gratitude. Let us hear him repeat, with Mary, these words of the Royal Prophet: *I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord;** we shall return to thy sacred courts, O Jerusalem! He testifies that he appreciates the favors of Heaven not only towards himself, but towards all mankind, whose day of deliverance is drawing near. He gives glory to God, and devotes himself with fresh courage to accomplish his adorable will, and to concur, by any new sacrifices, in the execution of his merciful designs.

Such are the holy and admirable dispositions of Joseph when he receives the order to return to Judea. Let us see now how he executes it, because we shall find therein new subjects to admire and edify us.

Let us contemplate the Holy Family returning to Judea. It encounters the same difficulties as when it left it; on that account Joseph has need of the same courage, the same resignation, the same strength of soul. But the Infant Jesus has grown during exile, and cannot be carried but with very great difficulty; on the other hand, he is still too weak to walk far. It is, therefore, necessary for Joseph and Mary to help him, and add to their fatigue by carrying him a great

* Ps. cxxi. 1.

portion of the way. But our adorable Saviour always lessens their sufferings by walking unaided as much as his strength will allow.

Let us consider him between his most holy Mother and his foster-father, and treading with his divine feet on the sand of the desert, which keeps but for a short time the precious imprint. What sentiments are then awakened in the hearts of Mary and Joseph! They are with God, who is their love. They see him confiding in their solicitude. They hear him thank them with his lips for their care of him. They read in his eyes his love and gratitude. O Jesus! Could Joseph and Mary feel their fatigues, when, in the intervals of repose, you impressed on their faces a kiss from your divine lips!

In the meanwhile they approach Judea; Joseph and Mary thank Providence that has watched over them, and brought them back to their own country. No doubt they would have wished to thank him at Jerusalem in his holy temple, and to see Bethlehem again, with its hospitable grotto, where the Infant God was born; but Joseph has learned that Archelaus reigns in Judea in the place of Herod his father; he apprehends, with reason, that he has inherited the hatred of that tyrant against the new King of the Jews. On that account, consulting only a wise prudence, he settles outside of his jurisdiction, at Nazareth in Galilee—thus fulfilling the designs of God, who had shown, by the prophets, that Christ would be called the Nazarene.

Such are the sentiments and conduct of Joseph on his return from Egypt—patient, resigned, courageous;

devoted to Jesus and Mary; acting in everything with great prudence, and from motives of faith and religion. How worthy, then, he is of the veneration of Christians! How much he deserves to be the object of our imitation in the whole conduct of our lives!

APPLICATION.

Let us place ourselves only at the point of view of faith, to appreciate all things. Let us, in a spirit of faith, be continually disposed to do all that God requires of us, whatever be the difficulties we may have to encounter.

At the thought of the benefits of God towards us, let us give full rein to sentiments of the most lively gratitude. Let us thank him especially for the grace of our vocation, for that command which our Angel Guardian gave us, on his part, to leave the Egypt of the world to go into the holy land of religion. Let us esteem such a favor. Let us thank the divine goodness for it, and, in return, let us devote ourselves without reserve to the work of salvation confided to us.

Like Joseph and Mary, let us draw our strength for the practice of virtue from our union with Jesus Christ. Let us be persuaded that nothing could appear to us too painful, did we act only in union with that divine Saviour. Let us be patient and resigned in the trials which Providence ordains for us. Let us think that the day will soon come when we hope to hear the angel of God communicate to us the order to leave the exile of this life to go into the heavenly country. Ah! what will the sufferings we may have endured appear to us then?

PRAYER.

The more I meditate on your virtues, O glorious St. Joseph! the more I understand the importance of practicing them. Obtain for me, then, O my holy patron! that I may be your worthy imitator! so that, when I leave this land of exile, I may hail the country where you await me, and whither you invite me to go through the narrow way you have followed.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider St. Joseph receiving and executing the order to quit Egypt, to return to the land of Israel.

An angel appeared to him, and said: *Arise, and take the child....*

Joseph received that order, 1*st*, with faith....2*d*, in a spirit of obedience and submission to God....3*d*, with great and holy joy....4*th*, with a true gratitude that leads him to praise the divine goodness, and to renew the act of perfect devotedness to the work which God has confided to him....

Joseph executes that order with promptitude....with courage....with prudence....

He draws his strength from his union with Jesus....In all that he does he is inspired by his love for that divine Child. From prudence, he does not go to Jerusalem, where the son of the cruel Herod reigns, but to Nazareth, a village outside of the jurisdiction of that prince.....

At the consideration of so many virtues, each practiced with so much perfection, let us think upon ourselves, and see if we truly take St. Joseph for our model....

FRUITS.—To preserve ourselves in the dispositions to do all that it will please God to order us by our superiors; to show that we are grateful for the grace of our vocation; to remain united to Jesus, who alone is the true strength of a Christian.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION.

JOURNEY OF THE HOLY FAMILY TO THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM.

"His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the pasch. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast."—St. Luke ii. 41, 42.

CONSIDERATION.

JOSEPH led at Nazareth, in company with Jesus and Mary, the most holy, the most edifying life that can be imagined, and even the most retired that was possible to him. However, every year, at the solemn day of the pasch, he went with the most holy Virgin to Jerusalem, to adore God in his Temple; and when Jesus was twelve years old, they brought him thither, to comply with the law, which became of obligation at that age.

What a subject of contemplation for the Christian soul is the Child Jesus walking on foot, sometimes with his most holy Mother, and sometimes with his foster-father, advancing towards Jerusalem, there to adore his heavenly Father, while awaiting the great day when he should there offer him the sacrifice of himself on Calvary! What inward joy for Mary and Joseph, who admire the qualities that he allows to manifest themselves in his adorable person!

But, alas! that joy was soon to change into grief, that it might be known what love and tenderness they had for the Child God.

When they had satisfied their devotion, they took again the road to Nazareth, journeying, as was the custom in that sort of pilgrimage, separate from each other—Mary with the women, and Joseph with the men. But Jesus had remained at Jerusalem, and they did not remark his absence, because Mary believed him to be with Joseph, and Joseph believed him to be with Mary. It was not, then, until evening that they perceived that the divine Child was not with them.

Ah! who can conceive what then passed in their souls, the sorrow by which they were agitated. No, nothing is capable of expressing their grief, because it was in accord with the greatness of their love for Jesus, and that love knew no bounds.

Christian souls! let us meditate on the dispositions of St. Joseph at the time of that sorrowful trial; we shall find therein useful lessons as to how we ought to conduct ourselves in our sufferings.

Joseph is in affliction, and that affliction has as its motive the loss of Jesus, the dangers that that divine Child might run, and, moreover, the deep grief in which the most holy Virgin was plunged. He fears that the adorable Saviour may be in the power of his enemies, and that the time of the great sacrifice may be already come. He thinks how Mary is asking herself if the prophecy of Simeon is at that time to be fully accomplished. He thinks not of himself, but makes the dangers and grief of those whom he loves the whole subject of his affliction.

Joseph is grieved at the loss of Jesus in a way that no language can express, because Jesus is all to him. But that divine Saviour is equally all for our souls, and we should then dread nothing so much as to lose him.

Joseph is afflicted, but not crushed down or disheartened; he weeps for Jesus, but he makes haste to find him again. Let us see him questioning his friends and kindred; then, returning towards Jerusalem, passing quickly through the streets and squares of that great city, allowing himself no rest, asking all those who could give him any information as to Him whom he seeks, saying to them, like the spouse in the Canticles: *Have you seen him whom my soul loveth?* *

What a lesson for those who give way to faint-heartedness, and who, when God sends them any sufferings, sink powerless beneath the weight of the trial! That the soul of a Christian should be sorrowful, or even overwhelmed with anguish, is not astonishing, since we are in a valley of tears; but it should never be disheartened, because it has always the assistance of Heaven in proportion to its actual wants.

Joseph is afflicted, and then, above all, he prays with the greatest fervor. Oh who will give us to understand what were the aspirations of his soul towards God during those three days of inconceivable anguish! What prayers he offered up to Heaven, in union with Mary, to receive the light of which he had need, or, rather, to obtain that the adorable Child should be restored to him!

Joseph suffers for the loss of Jesus, and yet he was

* Cant. iii. 3.

not the cause of it. How much greater would his grief have been had his conscience reproached him with being the cause of the misfortune that filled him with sorrow! Ah! how many tears, how many bitter tears, ought not those to shed who, through their own fault, have lost Jesus—those who, by their sins, have made him flee from their hearts, to which he alone could give peace and joy!

Such are the precious lessons that spring directly from the affliction of St. Joseph; let us add to them those that arise from his conduct when he had again found Jesus Christ.

Joseph, after having in vain sought for Jesus among his acquaintances and in the streets of Jerusalem, returns to the Temple. There he sees him in the midst of the doctors, questioning them with all the candor of a child of his age who desires instruction, and answering them with all the wisdom of the most enlightened among them. Oh what joy then filled his soul!

But it is with the joy of Joseph as with his sorrow: it has its principal cause in Jesus and Mary. He is happy because the Child is found again without any misfortune having happened to him, and because the heart of Mary is relieved of an enormous weight, or, rather, freed from the sword of grief that had pierced it, and had remained there all the time that she sought her adorable Son. In sentiments of such pure joy, Joseph thanks God from the bottom of his heart, and rejoices that the divine Child is returned again to him, to seek once more all the cares of his paternal solicitude.

APPLICATION.

Let us understand by the interior dispositions we have been meditating upon in St. Joseph, that there is no evil equal to the loss of Jesus. Ah! let us pity the condition of those who no longer possess him in their souls! Let us pity our own, if we have driven him from our hearts by sin.

Where Jesus is not, there is trouble, agitation, and perplexity. To be separated from Jesus is the greatest of misfortunes, and the one most deserving of our tears. The loss of Jesus is the loss of grace, is the loss of eternal life.

Without being in mortal sin, religious souls sometimes experience what a great suffering it is when Jesus deprives us of his presence. They have seasons of aridity and spiritual dryness. Jesus shows himself no longer to the eyes of their souls, and they believe him absent. Let them, then, imitate St. Joseph. Let them seek him with eagerness, in spite of their sufferings; and even because of their sufferings, let them pray. Let them go into the temple of God, and avoid the world; there they will find him, and he will console them the more in proportion to their grief for his apparent separation.

Let us watch over ourselves, so as not voluntarily to commit any sin, so that in times of aridity we may be able to give ourselves the consoling testimony that we are not the cause of it; that we may be able to say: "It is you, O Jesus! who conceals your presence; it is not I who force you to flee away." However, if we are in that state, let us examine if it is not in pun-

ishment of our offences, and let us adopt the resolution to amend our lives.

PRAYER.

I entreat you, O glorious St. Joseph! to obtain for me the grace of never separating myself from Jesus by sin. Oh what joy will be mine, if I am united to him at the moment of my death, since then I shall be permitted to go and join you in praising in heaven his infinite clemency. Grant by your intercession that I may experience that happiness; I beg it of you in the name of the sorrows and joys you experienced on occasion of the loss and finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us contemplate Joseph in his house at Nazareth, where he leads a holy and retired life....He goes every year to Jerusalem for the solemn day of the pasch.... He brings Jesus thither, when he was twelve years of age....

Let us contemplate the Child God making that journey. Let us ask ourselves what are his thoughts as he draws near to the City of Jerusalem, where he will be one day sacrificed.

Let us consider the joy of Mary and Joseph thus travelling with the divine Child....

But it enters into the designs of Providence to submit them to a painful trial. Jesus is not with them when they resume the road to Nazareth!....

What grief when they perceive it in the evening! What tears, and what a diligent search they make!

Let us consider the interior disposition of St. Joseph in these circumstances....

Let us imitate him in our afflictions; looking at them only from the point of view of faith, never allowing ourselves to be disheartened, but, above all, redoubling our prayers....

At last St. Joseph and the most holy Virgin find Jesus in the Temple. What joy!....and also what gratitude towards God, who tries the souls of his servants, and thus procures for them unutterable consolation!....

FRUITS.—To be afraid only of losing Jesus; to hasten to come forth from the state of sin, if, through our misfortune, we are in that state; to pray in our afflictions, and never to suffer ourselves to be downcast or discouraged.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION.

JOSEPH AT NAZARETH.

"He was subject to them."—St. Luke ii. 51.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us transport ourselves to the humble cottage of St. Joseph at Nazareth, and let us consider that he lives there, in union with Jesus Christ, the hidden God, and with his most holy mother, a life of labor, humility, retirement, and prayer.

St. Joseph is poor; he is obliged to undergo painful labor to supply the wants of the Holy Family; but it is with faith, and consequently with pleasure, that he submits to that necessity of his condition in life. He knows that by labor he pleases God, procures for Jesus and Mary what is necessary for them, and imitates the Incarnate Word, whom he sees unite with him in the labor of his humble trade.

Joseph joins to labor the practice of the most profound humility. He is the head of the Holy Family. Mary honors him as her lord; Jesus is as submissive to him as the most obedient of children. He has thus authority over what is greatest in earth and heaven; and yet his hear craves only for humiliation and contempt, and seeks only to be annihilated more and more.

Ah! what are his thoughts when he has to give an order to Mary, all whose prerogatives he knows!

or to Jesus, in whom he adores his Lord and his Master! He orders what he judges useful; but he does it only from obedience, and in sentiments of the most profound humility. Considering who are the august persons whom Providence has placed under him, his authority is a crushing weight to him; he would wish to act only as the humble servant of those whom he is obliged to command.

Oh how much progress St. Joseph must have made in humility! since the very exercise of a command was to him the occasion of practicing that excellent virtue. Therefore, he is worthy to be proposed for the imitation of those who have authority over others, and who do not exercise it well, but when they consider themselves as the servants of those who are subject to them.

But the life of St. Joseph at Nazareth was not only a life of labor and humility; it was also a life of retirement and prayer.

Jesus Christ, not judging it yet the time to reveal himself to men, leads in the house of his foster-father that hidden life by which he teaches us for so many years the practice of the virtues least apparent and least appreciated by men, but in reality most meritorious in the eyes of God; that life of silence, obedience, and denial which the holy Gospel makes known to us by these words, *He was subject to them;* and by these others, *Jesus increased in wisdom, age, and grace, with God and men.**

Now, who, above all, should understand this lesson of the divine Master, if not the two persons who were constantly witnesses of it? Who, after Mary, should

* St. Luke ii. 51.

learn more than Joseph from the hidden God the practice of retirement, prayer, and silence?

Let us question the heart of that holy patriarch; let us ask ourselves what sentiments must have been awakened there at the sight of a God thus annihilating himself with whom he dwells under the same roof.

What did Joseph think when beholding the Lord of heaven and earth poorly fed, poorly clad, and laboring in company with him with his own divine hands at the exercise of his laborious profession? What did he think when seeing the Messiah expected for four thousand years, the Desired of nations, passing many years lost among the poor, showing himself only as an ordinary workman, living unknown, perhaps despised? What did he think when beholding Him who had come into the world to change the face of the world by the efficacy of his holy words, condemning himself to a long and mysterious silence?

Ah! doubtless Joseph was astonished; but he understood that Jesus Christ, who taught by example before teaching by precept, was then establishing the basis of his doctrine, and practicing in the most sublime manner the great virtues he was to teach mankind. Therefore, he gives way to sentiments of the most lively admiration, and seeks, in imitation of his divine Master, to lead a hidden life,—all whose moments, not devoted to labor, are as much as possible consecrated to retirement, recollection, silence, and prayer.

In the exercises of this hidden life, Joseph acquires innumerable merits, and tastes the sweetest consolations. Jesus Christ is the sole object of his thoughts

and his affections. He makes use of his understanding only to know him, his heart to love him, his will to please him. All his actions are holy, and done from the highest motives. The retired life that he leads with Jesus and Mary ennobles his soul, and leaves it accessible only to the fires of the purest love.

Ah! if the house of Obededon was filled with blessings because the ark of the covenant had remained there for three months, what must the house of Joseph have been, where Mary, the ark of the new Covenant, resided for thirty years, with Jesus, the Lawgiver, from whom the Ark of the Jews received all its sacredness? With what blessings must not he have been enriched to whom that holy house belonged, and who there watched with so much religion and care over the sacred deposits confided to his prudence and devotedness!

The hidden life that Joseph lives with Jesus is to him a source of innumerable merits; it is also a source of ineffable consolation to him. Oh what sweet joy he experienced when he considered that he was alone with Jesus and Mary, when he felt his heart living in the life of their hearts, swelling under the influence of the same sentiments of adoration, goodness, and charity! How often has he had reason to exclaim, "It it is good to be here!" and to thank God for the place assigned him by his providence!

APPLICATION.

Let us lead in our communities, like the Holy Family at Nazareth, a life of labor, self-denial, and sacrifice.

Let us accept with joy whatever there may be painful to us in what obedience prescribes. Let us devote ourselves with zeal to the holy work entrusted to us. Let us think that, like Joseph, it is for Jesus and Mary we work, and, like him, nothing that is our duty will appear to us too painful or too difficult.

If we are in authority, let us imitate St. Joseph when giving his orders to Jesus and Mary; that is to say, let us order only in a spirit of faith, and let us act with respect and deference towards those under us. If we are inferiors, let us obey as Joseph would have wished to obey, or as Jesus and Mary obeyed him. Let us be humble, remembering that our holy patron, although placed over Jesus and Mary, never entertained esteem for himself.

Finally, let us exercise, in the measure prescribed by our rules, the practices of a hidden life. Oh what merits we shall acquire if, like St. Joseph, we remain in retirement with Jesus and Mary—if we live separate from the world—if we make our divine Saviour still more the subject of our meditations. Our souls would enjoy great peace, and that peace would be the presage to that we shall taste in heaven with our glorious patron, if we have been his faithful imitators upon earth.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who hast attained to excellence in this hidden life, and art its perfect model! thou hast at thy disposal special graces for those whom God calls to walk in thy footsteps; deign, I beseech thee, to make me a partaker of them. Obtain for me, with the love of retirement and silence, the gift of prayer, and the

courage to imitate the virtues thou didst practice in the holy house of Nazareth, so that, by thy protection, I may come, like thee, filled with graces and merits to the harbor of salvation.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us go in spirit to the modest abode of St. Joseph in Nazareth. Let us consider what virtues he there most especially practices.

Let us contemplate him employing himself in the labors of his occupation, upon which he enters with ardor,....in a spirit of faith,....and with a view to relieve the wants of Jesus and Mary.....

Let us see him practicing humility in the most perfect manner, and finding occasion for it in the very exercise of authority....

Finally, let us consider him as a perfect model of the hidden life....

Joseph admires Jesus leading a life so laborious, so modest, so hidden from the eyes of men.....he comprehends that the divine Master teaches by example what he was afterwards to teach by precept, and he becomes his imitator.

How many merits he acquires by his recollectedness, and his application to prayer, and what consolations he finds in his union with Jesus!

Let us learn, then, what are the advantages of the hidden life, and let us strive to acquire them as far as our duties permit.

FRUITS.—To respect those whom we order, and still more those who have a right to order us; to have no communication with people of the world, but what is indispensable.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION.

THE HOLY FAMILY.

"They had but one heart and one soul."—Acts iv. 32.

CONSIDERATION.

NOTHING is more pleasing to the Christian soul than to call to mind the greatness of the Holy Family, and the virtues of which they give us an example.

The Holy Family is the society of three persons—the most distinguished that have been or ever will be. The Holy Family is the Son of God, the Mother of God, and the Representative of God—it is the Holy of Holies, the Queen of Saints, and the greatest of the saints. It is impossible for us to conceive the dignity of even that one of its members who occupies the third rank; how much more difficult to conceive the excellence of the society they form together.

The Holy Family was the object of the veneration of the angels. Ah! how many times have those blessed spirits come down from heaven to earth to contemplate and honor it! With what emotions have they watched over it, and with what joy and readiness have they paid it their homage!

The Holy Family has always been the object of the veneration of true Christians, and even of the whole heavenly Court. What soul is there, however little devout, that has not, some time or other, visited it in pious meditation? Is it not with it that the greatest

servants of God found it their delight to dwell? What other company did St. Bernard, St. Bernardine of Sienna, St. Francis of Sales, and so many other no less illustrious persons seek in preference? Therefore they were delighted when celebrating its greatness, and did all they could to propagate devotion to it.

Let us hear the Blessed Leonard, of Port Maurice, on this subject: "The Holy Family," says he, "is neither all divine nor all human, but participates of both: therefore it is justly called the Trinity on earth." "Where shall we ever find," adds this pious author, "words to paint worthily this admirable trinity of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph? Render frequent homage to the adorable Trinity in heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but honor also the holy trinity that dwelt visibly among us upon earth. Engrave on your heart the names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, for they are three heavenly names. Teach your children to pronounce them with respect. Repeat those holy names frequently in the day, and let them be upon your lips at the moment you breathe your last."

But after having celebrated, in union with the angels and saints, the greatness of the Holy Family, let us meditate on the spectacle of the virtues it presents to us; let us see, above all, the piety and union that reign there. We have especial reason to do so; we, above all, who, by the grace of our vocation, are destined to live in community, and who recognize in the Holy Family the perfect model of every Christian society, more particularly, of every religious community.

The Holy Family was the sanctuary of all virtues, each practiced in perfection. There all was pure, all

was holy, all was in order. The time was divided between labor and prayer. The silence was not broken but by heavenly conversations. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived in seclusion from the world; poor in the riches of earth, but supporting privations with joy, they had the most pleasing, the closest union with each other by the bonds of the same love.

Ah! if it could be said of the first faithful that they had but one heart and one soul, with how much more reason could it be said of the members of the Holy Family! Their three wills, while remaining distinct, formed but one, so great was the conformity they had. Consequently, what peace, what concord! What attention, what consideration, what reciprocal desire to anticipate each other's wants!

But let us not confine ourselves to admiring this union; let us reflect on what was the source of it.

Let us reflect that the august persons of the Holy Family had the strictest union among themselves, because they esteemed and respected each other; because they acted from the same spirit, and for the same end; because they loved each other with a true love, and because they were holy and self-sacrificing.

The esteem and respect of people for each other establishes and maintains concord; now that esteem and that respect were perfect between the members of the Holy Family. Jesus honored Joseph and Mary more than child ever honored father and mother; Mary and Joseph adored Jesus from the depths of their hearts; and Jesus and Mary were full of veneration for Joseph, in whom they recognized the authority of God the Father.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were perfectly united—because they acted from the impulse of the same spirit, and with a view to the same end. They could each of them apply to himself the words of the prophet Isaias: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me;" and add, "It is through it I act; it is by its light I walk; it is by its inspirations I determine my conduct. I propose, as an end only, the accomplishment of the will of the heavenly Father and the salvation of souls." They had, then, the same views; they tended to the same end, and employed as much as possible the same means. They must, then, consequently have had the strictest union with each other.

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were perfectly united, because they loved each other with the purest, the greatest, the most constant, and the most generous love; but they also had an incentive to their union in their humility and self-sacrifice. Reason and experience show that those alone can be truly united who are humble, contemptible in their own eyes, and without pretensions; who renounce themselves, combat their self-love, and seek the general rather than individual good; who are always ready to sacrifice their personal views in favor of others; who embark with readiness and joy in everything that can give pleasure, or procure some advantage to those with whom they are associated. What, then, must have been the union of the Holy Family, where each of the members that composed it was as humble, as elevated in dignity, aspiring only to serve the two others, and to become annihilated, if we may say so, the better to honor them—making it a happiness to sacrifice all for

them, seeking only to bear the sufferings and alleviate the labors of the others.

Behold what were the principal sources of the union of the persons of the earthly Trinity—an admirable union, which we religious, above all, ought to strive to establish and maintain in our communities, so that they may be images of the Holy Family, and that Jesus Christ may be pleased to dwell there, and pour forth upon them the abundance of his graces.

APPLICATION.

Let us do all that depends on us, that to our community may be applied these words of David: *How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.** For this end, first, let us esteem and respect our Brothers, looking on them only with the eyes of faith, and manifesting on all occasions that we honor God in their person; second, let us not act but under the impulse of the spirit of God, and solely with a view to the greatest good; third, let us love each other as Brothers ought to love, destined to live always together, and to share, one day, the same happiness near our Venerable Father; fourth, let us be men of humility and self-sacrifice; let us know how to renounce, for the sake of union and peace, all pretensions and all personal views.

Let us honor, and get others to honor, the Holy Family. Let us often present it to the admiration of our pupils. On our side, let us invoke with piety the sacred names of the persons that compose it. Let us say frequently: "O holy names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, be always on my lips, and in my heart! May

* Ps. cxxxii. 1.

you be there engraven by a love most pure and most constant. May those sweet names, unceasingly repeated, make, at each aspiration, the delight of my soul. May I pronounce them with respect, love, and confidence when I breathe my last, so that I may praise them forever in heaven."*

PRAYER.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart, my soul, and my life. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, grant that I may die in your holy company.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us often contemplate the Holy Family. What a spectacle it offers to us!....

Let us recall to mind the greatness, the dignity of each of the three persons that compose it....and consequently the excellence of the society they form....Let us remember that the Holy Family was the object of the veneration of angels and saints....

Let us contemplate the union that reigns there....

Let us think that these three great persons are so united because they esteem and respect each other.... because they act from the impulse of the same spirit, which is the Spirit of God....because they love each other, and excell in humility and self-sacrifice....

Let us learn from this to esteem and respect our Brothers, to love them, to be truly humble, and always anxious to do them a service. Oh what union and peace would then reign in our communities, each of which would be an image of the Holy Family.

FRUITS.—To invoke with piety the holy names of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; often to present the Holy Family to the admiration of our pupils.

* R. P. Louis, *Devotion to St. Joseph.*

TWENTIETH MEDITATION.

THE FAITH OF JOSEPH.

"The just man lives by faith."—Heb. x. 38.

CONSIDERATION.

Those words of the great Apostle may be applied, above all, to Joseph, who was the justest of men. Joseph, in truth, lived by faith; it was by faith he thought, loved, and acted; it was by faith he fed his understanding with the great truths of religion, excited in his heart noble sentiments corresponding to them, and performed the holy actions by which he made himself so agreeable in the eyes of the Lord.

Let us, to-day, consider this great servant of God with regard to the faith by which he was animated; let us see what were in him the characters of that virtue which we ought to place in the first rank—we, above all, who have the spirit of faith as the spirit of our Institute.

St. Joseph believed with a faith universal, simple, firm, practical, and consequently eminently meritorious before God.

The faith of Joseph was, first, universal. He believed all that God has revealed by his prophets, and awaited the coming of the Redeemer at the time they had pointed out; he believed in the incarnation of the Son of God, in the establishment of his king-

dom in this world, in the means of sanctification that he would procure for mankind.

The faith of Joseph was, secondly, simple, humble, and docile. God does not make known to him with an imposing display the truths of which he wishes him to be the depository; he does not speak to him from the midst of thunder and lightning, as to the Jewish people; nor from the midst of a burning bush, as to Moses; but only by the ministry of an angel, and even that angel does not put himself in communication with him when awake, as with Abraham, Gedeon, and Zacharias. He appears to him in sleep, shows himself to him in a dream, to instruct him in the greatest, the most astonishing of mysteries, to tell him that Mary, his spouse, is the Mother of God; that she will give birth to the Son of the Most High, who comes to save mankind, and to whom he must give the name of Jesus.

Now Joseph, in that revelation, as in the others with which he was favored, believes simply in what God makes known to him; he does not ask for an explanation; he does not beg the Lord to assure him by a miracle, as Gedeon did, that he was not the sport of an illusion. No, no; his heart perfectly docile, because it is only under the influence of grace, adheres to all that the angel revealed to him on the part of God.

The faith of Joseph was firm and unalterable, although it was most severely tried. And here we find the most distinguishing character of that virtue in our holy patron. He believed, on the word of the angel, in the divinity of Jesus Christ, though a multitude of

contradictory arguments presented themselves to shake his faith.

How, in truth, could he believe that the Child whom he saw born in a stable, whose cries he heard, and whose tears he saw flow, was the eternal God? How could he believe that he was all-powerful, who showed himself to him as weakness itself? How could he believe that He was the Master of all that happened, and directed at his pleasure intellects and hearts whom he was obliged to carry into a distant country to withdraw him from a tyrant who wished to put him to death? How could he believe that the Holy of Holies would appear with the outward marks of sin; that the Messiah promised to the world, and expected from the commencement by so many nations, would be only a poor mechanic, working with him, gaining each day his bread by the sweat of his brow? And yet St. Joseph believed it. His faith was not shaken by these seeming contradictions, that must have presented themselves to his mind.

He does not understand how infinite greatness can be allied with such nothingness, yet he never doubts for a single instant that Jesus is that infinite greatness. He adores in Him the divine Word, the eternal Wisdom clothed with human nature to save mankind.

The faith of St. Joseph was, then, firm and unalterable, although severely tried. Let us add that it was a practical faith, leading him to act in all circumstances in conformity with what he believed.

Joseph believed, and consequently he constantly studied to nourish his soul with revealed truths; he made them the sweetest study of his mind, and en-

graved them deeply on his heart; he testified his convictions by his sentiments and his actions; he always desired, and, when he could, fulfilled the good that faith pointed out to him.

If, as St. Paul teaches, it was by faith that Noah built the ark, that Abraham was ready to sacrifice Isaac, that the patriarchs and prophets fulfilled their mission and gave glory to God: it was also by faith that Joseph made himself pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, and concurred in the great work of the redemption of the world.

By faith he understood to what a degree of perfection God called him, and to correspond to his vocation, he sacrificed his own will, surmounted the repugnances of nature, embraced a poor, painful, and laborious life, and practiced in an eminent degree the most excellent virtues.

By faith he adores God in Jesus, and honors the Mother of God in the most holy Virgin.

By faith he acts as the most loving of fathers to the divine Infant, and, like the best of husbands, to his most holy Mother.

By faith he executes punctually all that is commanded him. He sets out in all haste for Egypt; he remains there all the time that God wishes; he leaves it to return to his own country; he devotes himself to the most severe labors; he exhausts himself in taking care of the Child God and his Virgin Mother.

What merits must he have acquired by that virtue carried to such perfection!.... Ah! let us give glory to that great servant of God who had always a faith so universal, so simple, so enlightened, so firm, so con-

stant, and, above all, so fruitful in good works. But let us remember that the true means of honoring him for the faith we admire in him, is to do all in our power that ours may have exactly the same characters.

APPLICATION.

Let us examine ourselves in comparison with the model we have been contemplating, and see if we resemble him. Christians should do so, who make profession of believing in Jesus Christ and all that he has taught, we religious who tend to the perfection of Christianity, we, especially, Brothers of the Christian Schools, who have the spirit of faith as the spirit of our Institute. Yes, we ought to have a faith simple, entire, sincere, firm, and unalterable; a lively and eminently practical faith.

Has our faith these characters? Do we adhere with simplicity to the teachings of the Church? Do we study to see in everything only the supernatural side? Do we see God in small things as well as in great—in what appears to us obscure as well as in what we comprehend—in what contradicts us as well as in what is conformable to our inclinations?

In fine, is our faith practical? What effects does it produce in our souls and our hearts? Do we endeavor to occupy our understanding with holy thoughts, and to cherish in ourselves religious sentiments? Do our actions show what we profess to believe, and are they always in accord with our religious principles? Alas! have we not cause to fear, that we may be reproached with believing one way and acting another? Let us make haste, then, to amend our conduct, and strive to

give to our faith the qualities we have admired in that of St. Joseph.

PRAYER.

Great St. Joseph, who have so much glorified God by your faith, obtain for me and my Brothers the grace of imitating you in the practice of that virtue, so that by it we may offer worthy homage to Jesus Christ. Conduct ourselves with courage, constancy, and piety in the discharge of all our duties, and thus become worthy to share in the blessings with which God recompenses in heaven your faith so humble, so constant, so fruitful in good works.

RÉSUMÉ.

It is, above all, of St. Joseph these words may be said : *The just man lives by faith.* Joseph had : 1*st.* An entire, universal faith extending to all that God had made known to him....

2*d.* A simple faith ; he believes with heart and soul in what is revealed to him; he puts no questions, he requires no miracles....

3*d.* A firm and unalterable faith, although severely tried....

4*th.* A practical faith ; giving to his thoughts and sentiments a religious character, and producing acts of the most sublime virtues.

Let us examine if our faith has the same characters ; if it is not so, let us reform our conduct, and begin by asking grace to do so through the intercession of St. Joseph.

Fruits.—To instruct ourselves well in the truths of faith and the maxims of the holy Scripture ; to look at everything from a supernatural point of view ; to watch that our actions are made conformable to our principles.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

HOPE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Blessed be the man that trusteth in the Lord, and the Lord shall be his confidence."—Jerem. xvii. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

HOPE in God seems to be, of all sentiments, the one which is most pleasing to that sovereign Master, for it is the homage addressed most directly to his goodness. Therefore it forms an essential part of the worship we owe him, and has been the virtue of all true adorers. Abraham hoped against all hope. Job, in the midst of his numberless sufferings, gives expression to these words of sublime confidence: *Although he should kill me, I will trust in him.** Mathathias inspires the same sentiment in his sons: "Put your confidence in the Lord," says he, "and you will triumph over all your enemies."

But if all the just have glorified the divine goodness by hope, St. Joseph has done it in an excellent manner, since he was eminently just. Let us this day, then, consider our glorious patron under that point of view, and let us reflect on the object, the motives, and the qualities of his hope.

St. Joseph did not hope for advantages here below. He understood too well the vanity of all this is tran-

* Job xiii. 15.

sitory. That which he desired, and expected with confidence, was the protection of God; his blessing and his grace, the good things of eternity, and the crown that never fades. St. Joseph hoped for the redemption promised to our first parents. He always had the certainty in his soul, that the great day of the coming of the Saviour would arise upon the world at the time foretold by the prophets. When he saw that day so longed for, his hope only increased; he had the confidence that the Church, the new Jerusalem, would soon gather all nations within its fold, that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ would be established everywhere throughout the earth, and last till the end of the world. The angel, in revealing the mystery of the Incarnation, had said to him: *Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.** Joseph is certain that this deliverance shall be wrought, and that thus, through Jesus, the first sin shall be atoned for, and innocence restored to men.

Behold what was the object of the hope of St. Joseph. Now let us consider what were in him the motives for that virtue.

Joseph hoped, because he had great faith in the veracity of God. He knew the divine promises, and he knew that our Lord fulfilled all that he promised; his faith suggested to him in advance these words of Jesus Christ: *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*† He hoped, because he believed in the goodness and the power of God. Ah! he entered far into the heart of his divine Master, he who was the most faithful of his servants, and he

* St. Matt. i. 21. † St. Mark xiii. 31.

saw that the sentiment that predominated there was goodness and mercy. It was on that account he found room in his heart for the sweetest confidence.

St. Joseph had also, as a motive for his hope, the protection of Mary, the prayers of that spotless Virgin, who has justly been called omnipotent in intercession, and to whom God can refuse nothing. Still the greatest motives for the hope of St. Joseph was always Jesus himself.

Ah! could he but have unlimited confidence, he who held in his arms the Mediator of heaven and earth? How could he doubt in the succor of God, he who, while praying, offered to Him his adorable Son as a suppliant Victim? The Israelites were filled with confidence when they had the ark of the Lord with them. How much more Joseph, who carried in his arms the Lord himself.

Such are the principal motives for the virtue of hope in St. Joseph; but let us consider, moreover, what were its qualities.

The hope of St. Joseph was constant and entire, firm, prudent, and efficacious. At every instant of his life he could say to God: "O Lord, I have hoped in you from my tenderest youth; I hope in you at this very moment; and when the hour of my death shall come, I will sleep in hope." Yes, he hoped during the whole of his life, as well as in every circumstance of it. Let us remember his journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and, above all, his flight into Egypt. He is not troubled; he does not give way to disquietude; he conceives neither sadness nor apprehension, although he has so many apparent reasons for doing

so; he knows that he is in the hands of God, and he has confidence in his paternal goodness. Let us remark, above all, that he never lost courage. He knew too well that such faint-heartedness outrages God in a manner most sensible to his tender heart; for it is, as it were, a declaration that one believes no longer in his goodness, or cares for his providence.

The confidence of St. Joseph did not fail to be most severely tried. Let us judge of this by the refusals he experiences with Mary at Bethlehem; but let us observe that he never lost strength, but, on the contrary, grew stronger by the trial.

Still, let us not imagine that the confidence of St. Joseph was such that he did nothing on his part to secure the success of the designs of God. There was in him no disquietude; but, at the same time, there was no indifference. Joseph trusted in God; but he worked with all his strength to conform to his will. His hope was, therefore, in accord with the rules of wisdom, and in no way resembled the presumption that counts upon Providence doing its part without our doing, on our side, what it is in our power to effect.

Let us consider, finally, the effects of this virtue on St. Joseph. By the very fact of his having a perfect confidence, he finds no difficulty in what God commands him. He pays homage to the divine goodness, and is sure of his protection. He fortifies himself against adversity, which he endures by resting on God himself. By anticipation, he enjoys, to a certain extent the things that he hopes for, and is happy in what he has not, yet as if he already possessed it. By his confidence he settles himself in a great peace no

less sweet to his heart than agreeable to God, whose providence he honors. Finally, he acquires numberless merits for heaven, where the sovereign Master finds a happiness in giving his elects the good things they hoped for.

APPLICATION.

Let us strive to be, in reference to hope, the worthy imitators of our glorious patron. Let us banish from our hearts all uneasiness. Let us think only on doing the work of God, and we may be sure that God will do our work. Above all, let us never give way to discouragement. Is not God our Father almighty and always full of goodness for us? Until now, his providence has never failed us. Why, then, should we suppose that it will be less favorable to us in future? Moreover, are we not, like St. Joseph, sure of being able to obtain all we want through Jesus, our Mediator, and through the intercession of Mary, our good Mother?

Let us pray and work, and excite in ourselves a great confidence, which, while it will lead us to do generously, on our part, all that is in our power, will settle us in interior peace, by the conviction that God will bless our efforts, and secure the success of our labors.

Oh! how advantageous such a confidence should be to us! What courage for the practice of virtue it should excite in our souls! What merits in consequence should we acquire, and what homage should we render to Providence! Therefore, God would recompense us by peace of heart in this life, and by an increase to that happiness without end in the next, which alone can satisfy the aspirations of the heart.

PRAYER.

Hail, O Joseph, model of holy hope! I bless you for your confidence in God, by which you have so worthily honored his goodness towards men. Deign, O loving Father, to obtain for me a participation in the same sentiments. Grant that I may act from the intimate conviction that I can do all through Jesus, and through Mary's influence and yours with Jesus, so that, filled with confidence, I may labor with courage in the work of God, and may merit the crown the final object of that very hope I solicit through your intercession.

RÉSUMÉ.

Confidence in God is very agreeable to him, because it is a worthy homage to his goodness towards us.

All the saints have excelled in that confidence. St. Joseph is in the foremost rank among them.

He expected with confidence the coming of the Messiah ....the graces that were accessory for all the circumstances in which it pleased God to place him....

His hopes had, as a motive, his faith in the goodness and power of God....it rested also on his relations with Mary, but still more on those he had with Jesus, the Mediator between heaven and earth....

His confidence was entire,....universal,....firm and unalterable,....wise and prudent....

His confidence was exceedingly advantageous to him, for it procured a sweet peace....it drew to him great graces, and excited great courage in his heart to practice virtue.

Let us examine if our confidence in the divine goodness has the same character as the hope we have meditated upon in our glorious patron....

FRUITS.—To multiply our acts of hope; to combat every trouble, every disquietude; never to be disheartened, for want of courage directly outrages the heart of God.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

CHARITY OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Thou knowest that I love thee."—St. John xxi. 17.

CONSIDERATION.

Jesus Christ, when calling St. Peter to a great mission, said to him thrice, *Lovest thou me?* and when the Apostle had thrice answered him, "I love you," he entrusted to him the care of his whole Church. That divine Master thus teaches us that those alone are fit for great things who have great love in their hearts, and that God does not confide what is dear to him but to such souls as are inflamed with the fire of charity. We can, then, from that sole consideration, conclude that St. Joseph had a perfect love for God, since, after Mary, no one was called to greater things, received a more important mission, or had the care of persons as dear to the heart of God.

Let us, then, to-day, consider him as a model of divine love. Let us reflect that, essentially, he loved only, God and Jesus Christ, his only Son; that he loved him with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his strength; that thus he was always animated by perfect charity.

But let us consider the charity of St. Joseph in its

source, so as to enlighten us on what we ought to do to love God as he loved him.

St. Joseph excelled in love for God, because he received great graces, to which he was always faithful; because, full of good will, he made it his whole study to make himself docile to the suggestions of the Spirit of Love dwelling in his heart; because, with all the force of his soul, he strove to fulfil the greatest of the precepts: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*

St. Joseph excelled in love for God, because his heart, so well disposed, had the closest union with that of Mary. How could he but have been inflamed with the fire of divine love, since his heart was thirty years in communication with that of the Queen of the Seraphim, the Mother of pure love, the Virgin who alone loved God more than all the angels and saints together?

But the principal source of divine love in St. Joseph was his relation with the Child God. When we remember that he was his nursing father and protector; when we remember that he so many times contemplated those divine hands that were afterwards to work so many miracles; that divine mouth smiling on him with love, from which were afterwards to come all the teachings of the law of love; those divine eyes, from which sparkled a soul on fire with love; when we think of Joseph holding in his arms the divine Child, and kissing him with a tenderness that was only equalled by his respect; when we contemplate him having his heart placed so near that of Jesus, and feeling on his breast the beatings of the heart of Jesus;—ah! then we can understand how no one, next to Mary, had so much love for God!

O Joseph, how happy you are to be favored by so many graces, and still more in having so faithfully corresponded to them! How happy you are in having been in such relations with Jesus and Mary! Your humble abode at Nazareth was the home of charity. Image of the heavenly Jerusalem! nothing was there heard but hymns of pure love, and the only study was to increase in love.

But let us not limit ourselves to reflections on the object and sources of divine love in St. Joseph. Let us consider also its principal qualities.

The love with which St. Joseph was inflamed for God was a generous love, inclining him to a perfect devotedness to his service, making him perform with joy very many and very great sacrifices. It was an invincible love, not to be checked or surmounted by anything; it was a noble love, preserving no attachment for the pleasures, honors, or riches of this world. The heart of Joseph loved creatures, not for their own sake, but for God's. It did not love them but in as much as they could unite him more closely to the sovereign good.

Under the influence of that sentiment, Joseph thought habitually on God, whom he loved. His mind, in accord with his heart, did not turn aside from Him who deserves to occupy all our thoughts. His love for God alone ruled his desires and his conduct. If he prayed, if he spoke, if he worked, it was from love, and to acquire more love. As David said, "I have believed, therefore I have spoken," Joseph might say, "I have loved God, and for that I have thought, wished, and acted."

It could not but be so. He whom God judged worthy to be the spouse of Mary; he to whom he confided the person of his adorable Son, the sole object of his delight,—must have had the fulness of divine love.

Joseph was an angelic being that burned with love in the presence of God. Not only was the fire of charity never quenched in his soul by sin, but it did not experience the least diminution or alteration. Joseph always loved God with all his capacity for loving, and constantly strove to love him more.

His love did nothing but increase; for it was fed not only by spiritual consolations, but even by contradictions and trials. It attained its perfection in that hour of happiness when the seraphic being left this world to go to the next, to be placed in the foremost rank of the heavenly seraphim.

APPLICATION.

After having considered the love with which the heart of Joseph was animated, let us enter into ourselves, and see how we stand in that regard.

Do we truly love Jesus Christ? Is it he who alone is the first and essential object of our affections? We often say, "O Lord, I love you," but is it not a simple form, answering to nothing real, and which we repeat rather from habit than because it expresses the real state of our souls?

Also, perhaps our conscience answers us that our heart, instead of rising to heaven, often turns its affections towards earth. Ah! if it is so, let us hasten to break our chains. God offers us the grace to do so

Let us correspond to it, so that there may be in our hearts only a pure love, which may be like Joseph's—noble, ardent, generous, meritorious in the eyes of the God of love, to whom we have devoted ourselves.

Yes, such is the love that ought to exist in us. Why should we not aspire to possess it? Can we not draw it from the same sources as St. Joseph; that is to say, from the most pure heart of Mary, and still more from the sacred heart of Jesus? Are we not called to contemplate by meditation the Infant God working the mysteries of his love? Do we not speak to that sweet Saviour when we pray to him? Above all, are we not under the influence of his soul when we possess him in the holy Communion?

Ah! is it not the most astonishing of mysteries that our heart is so often united to the heart of Jesus, and that it does not participate more in the divine flames of his love? Let us see if the cause of it is not in ourselves.

Let us do, then, all that is in our power, that our communions may be fervent. How many fruits we could draw therefrom, since we should then increase greatly in love, and consequently make rapid progress in the path of perfection!

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who have so loved God and his adorable Son, how I desire to have the same love in my heart as in yours! Deign, then, I beseech you, to present my prayer to my adorable Saviour, and obtain for me that the flames of divine charity may be kindled in

my soul, so that I may act in all things from love for God, and thus may be made worthy, one day, to possess, with you, the God of love.

RÉSUMÉ.

Joseph could say with still more reason than St. Peter, "O Lord, I love thee."

The principal sources of that love were: first, the grace that was so abundant in him, and to which he always corresponded most faithfully; second, his relations with the most holy Virgin, which must necessarily have led him to love God, as she loved that sovereign being; third, his relations with Jesus. Ah! how could that heart, that felt the beatings of the heart of Jesus, be other than consumed by the fires of divine love!....

The love with which St. Joseph was inflamed was generous....invincible ....noble....effective....producing in him detachment from creatures, leading him not to think, wish, or act in anything but with a view to God.

Far from diminishing, that love grew daily more and more, until the moment when that seraphic being was transferred to the first rank of the seraphim in heaven.

Let us ask ourselves if we participate in the divine love with which St. Joseph was inflamed. Let us remember that we can draw it at the same sources, since God gives us his grace in superabundance; since we can place ourselves in intimate relations with Mary; since, above all, we have communion in such excellent ways with Jesus Christ himself.

FRUITS.—Let us often ask the grace of pure love. Let us love holy communion, and prepare ourselves well for it.

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

DEVOTEDNESS OF ST. JOSEPH.

"O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid."
Ps. cxv. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

All the true servants of God have been men of self-sacrifice, for they all devoted themselves without reserve to the work that Providence had committed to them; but here our glorious patron deserves to be placed in the first rank, for his devotedness was by excellence pure and holy in its source, great and admirable in its effects.

The devotedness of St. Joseph was pure and holy in its source; for it had as motives the noble sentiments of his soul, his fidelity to grace, the constant sight of the devotedness of Mary, and, above all, of the humiliations of the Word made flesh.

Joseph was a man of self-sacrifice, because he had a noble and generous heart. Gifted from his tenderest infancy, and with a view to his destiny, with the most happy natural qualities, he felt himself impelled, as it were, to sacrifice for God all that he was master of. He never knew the cold calculations of egotism or self-love that paralyze the soul, that retard all the noble aspirations of the heart, that crush out every earnest wish for what seems even most

desirable. He never knew those constant references to self that leave no liberty of action but when some personal advantages can be drawn therefrom. He had always in his soul the noble ambition to do good, whatever sacrifices it might cost him.

Joseph was a man of devotedness through justice and gratitude. He understood that man, having received all from God, ought to give all to God, to do all that God requires of him, and that solely from supernatural views.

Joseph was a man of devotedness, because he was faithful to grace. Souls docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost are ever ready with the greatest generosity to do the good for which Providence gives them the opportunity. Now the soul of Joseph possessed always that docility in the highest degree. He was, therefore, eminently full of generosity, as, indeed, the ministry of sacrifice and self-denial, to which he was destined, required.

Joseph was a man of devotedness, because he participated in the interior dispositions of the most holy Virgin. He knew the generosity with which Mary devoted herself to virtue, and with what just title she could style herself *the handmaid of the Lord.* He saw her disposed to suffer all for the glory of God, and the salvation of man; and from the time of the prophecy of the aged Simeon, he knew that she would, one day, carry her spirit of sacrifice so far as to consent to the death of Jesus himself for the salvation of the world. His relations with Mary must then have had the effect of leading him to devote himself, without reserve for the same end, for nothing more in-

spires generosity than to see it practiced by those we love.

Joseph was a man of devotedness, above all, because he was the faithful imitator of Jesus. Ah! how much he must have longed to sacrifice himself for God when he saw how far the divine Word sacrificed himself for man—when he looked upon the Almighty become weakness itself, the Eternal become a mortal man, the increased Wisdom entrusting himself to his prudence and paternal care! Yes, he must have felt a kind of constraint to devote himself with Jesus and for Jesus, and that, more than all, when, by the light of prophecy, he foresaw the sacrifice of Calvary—the bloody sacrifice by which the divine Redeemer was to reconcile earth to heaven!

Let us remember the love of Joseph for Jesus—a love which had its source in the love of the heavenly Father for the eternal Word, and which consequently was in him all but unlimited. Let us bear in mind that he who loves desires nothing so much as to be made conformable to the person beloved, and we shall understand how far Joseph must have been a man of devotedness.

But let us not consider the devotedness of St. Joseph merely in its source; let us look at it also in itself and its consequences.

Joseph devoted himself for the glory of God and the salvation of men; he devoted himself for the protection of Mary, for the preservation and education of the Child Jesus—that is to say, for the highest, the most excellent, the most noble objects that it is even possible to conceive. Looked at in its end, the de-

votedness of St. Joseph is consequently sublime. It is equally so when seen in its character of universality; for it extended to all his life, and to all the circumstances of it.

From the first dawning of reason, St. Joseph said: "I am your servant, O my God, and ready to execute your will in all things." He kept himself in those dispositions, or, rather, he constantly made them more perfect; for the more he advanced in life, the more motives he had to devote himself to the work of God. Does not everything speak to us of his devotedness? Remember Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Egypt; do we not everywhere see him sacrificing himself for Jesus and Mary, without any interested regard for himself?

His devotedness was greatly tried. All the life of St. Joseph is, in truth, but a series of tribulations, of sufferings of every kind, and appears but as a long track covered with obstructions everywhere. But that great servant of God remains always the same, never suffering a shadow of discouragement to enter his heart. His devotedness was, therefore, sincere, and manifested a truly generous soul.

Let us add, finally, that the mission of Joseph, being hidden from the eyes of men, had nothing encouraging from a natural point of view; that he did not maintain himself in his dispositions to sacrifice all for God, but from views of faith; that thus, under every aspect, his devotedness is sublime, worthy of the veneration of angels and men, and that it consequently must have been infinitely meritorious in the eyes of God.

APPLICATION.

It is we religious, above all, who ought to be men of devotedness, since we make profession of belonging all to God. What souls should be devoted to him, if not those that dwell in his house? Who have more motives for sacrificing themselves for Jesus and with Jesus than we, who are called by a special grace to imitate that adorable Saviour—who, more than we, have been the objects of the divine liberality? From whom, consequently, has the sovereign Master more right to exact sacrifices?

Under whatever point of view we consider ourselves, it is evident that, as religious, we should possess a devotedness that shrinks from nothing. As Christian teachers, too, we should possess it; for we have, as such, to fulfil a work wholly of self-denial.

Let us remember that those alone do good who, like St. Joseph, are men of sacrifice, and let us endeavor to make ourselves capable of doing all the good God expects of us.

Let us propose to ourselves to imitate the devotedness of St. Joseph. Oh what good we should then work in souls! How many merits we should acquire for that other life where God recompenses, as God, those who during the days of their pilgrimage devoted themselves to his glory, and the salvation of their brethren.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, model of perfect devotedness! grant me your protection, that I may become your imitator.

Grant that I may be truly a man of sacrifice, and that thus I may do all the good that God expects of me. I beg it of you, by your desire that Jesus Christ may be glorified, and that the souls he confides to me may apply to themselves the merits of his sufferings.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph was, in a most eminent degree, devoted to the work that Providence required of him....

Let us consider how his devotedness was pure in its source, and admirable in its effects....

Joseph was a man of devotedness, because he had a noble soul;....because he had an upright mind, and a grateful heart;....because he was docile to the call of grace;....because he strove to make himself like to Mary....

Joseph was, above all, a man of devotedness, through his desire to make himself like to Jesus Christ, who is the adorable Victim of our salvation....

The devotedness of St. Joseph extended through all his life....he was tried by difficulties without number, but never lost heart....His was a devotedness that made no display before the eyes of men, and could only be sustained by views of faith.

The devotedness of St. Joseph is the model of that we ought to have, either as religious or as teachers.

FRUITS.—To strive to do nothing but from motives of faith, and devoid of self-interest; to pray to God to raise among religious many filled with devotedness and self-denial.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

PURITY OF ST. JOSEPH.

"No price is worthy of a continent soul."—Eccles. xxvi. 20.

CONSIDERATION.

It is in those terms that the Holy Ghost extols chastity—that is to say, the virtue that requires the greatest efforts, exacts the most sacrifices, and calls for most precautions; the virtue by which, above all, we give proof of our love for God, fulfil our end, put ourselves in a condition to do good to souls, honor our profession, and glorify the God of holiness who has called us to his service.

Let us, then, esteem chastity, and practice it in all its perfection. In order to sustain and encourage us in this path, let us meditate to-day on the purity of St. Joseph. Let us ask ourselves why that great servant of God excelled in purity, and what were in him the effects of that virtue?

St. Joseph excelled in purity, because he had the fear of God, and would a thousand times sooner have died than commit sin; because he wished only to please God, and knew that the Holy of holies cannot accept the homage of a heart defiled by sin; because he knew that chastity is the indispensable means to make ourselves agreeable to Him of whom it is said that *he feedeth among the lilies.**

* Cant. ii. 16.

Joseph excelled in purity, because he surrounded himself with all the precautions necessary to excel in that virtue. He loved retirement and prayer; he embraced with courage the practice of mortification; he led a most laborious life, interrupting his labors only to give himself up to exercises of piety, or to take needful repose. He fled from a world all covered with snares; he watched over his senses, especially his eyes, and on that account led in a mortal body the life of an angel.

Joseph excelled in purity, because he was faithful to the graces with which God endowed him, to make him worthy of the mission for which he was destined. Let us reflect what was that mission, and think how necessary it was that he should be chaste who was entrusted with it.

Among all mere creatures, none approached so near to the sanctity of God as Mary. She was immaculate in her conception, the Virgin Queen of virgins, who first raised the standard of virginity, the Virgin worthy to be the spouse of the Holy Ghost, and to give to earth the divine Liberator who was to destroy the empire of sin and the flesh, and to cause chastity, holiness, and justice to reign.

In the decrees of Providence, the most holy Virgin needed a spouse, a guardian, a protector, and it is the Holy Ghost himself who should choose him and make him worthy of such a mission. Who, then, can conceive to what a degree of chastity God called St. Joseph, and to what a degree he raised himself by corresponding to the grace given him for that end! Joseph made himself worthy to be the spouse of the most pure

Virgin. God, before whom the angels are scarce pure, cast his eyes upon him, and said: "Behold the man according to my heart. Joseph, I choose you to be the companion, the friend, the support, the spouse of Her to whom he said: *Thou art all fair, my love, and there is not a spot in thee.*"

Joseph excelled in purity, because he studied to make himself conformable to the most holy Virgin. When we remember that he lived about thirty years with the Queen of angels, that he shared in all her sentiments, felt the influence of her unequalled virtue, we can imagine that none of the saints more excelled in chastity, that none of them carried that virtue to a more exalted degree.

But St. Joseph was to have a mission holier still than that of spouse of Mary. He was to be the nursing father of Him who is the substantial image of the eternal Father, and from whom all that is holy receives its holiness.

If the God of Israel required so great purity to touch the ark of the covenant, if he enjoined so many purifications upon the priests before daring to approach his altar, what must have been the chastity of Joseph, who was so frequently allowed to touch with his hands, to carry in his arms, to lift towards heaven the very Author of the covenant—the holy Victim of whom all the victims of the old law were but the figure!

Yes, they were chaste, and they became so more and more, those eyes that so many times beheld Jesus Christ—that is to say, him who radiates chastity as the sun radiates light. Yes, they were pure, and they became so more and more, those hands that so often touched the adorable Victim, that

was in his own person to crucify the flesh with its concupiscences, to destroy the kingdom of sin, to efface by his blood all our defilements, and to give by his contact holiness even to our bodies.

Blessed, then, be God who favored Joseph with a gift of chastity whose excellence we cannot conceive. Let us thus give glory to that great saint for all he has made himself worthy of by his good will.

Oh! how happy he was to keep himself pure! He deserved that God should look upon him with love, and crown him with his graces. He made himself worthy to become the spouse of Mary, the guardian and the adopted father of Jesus. He placed himself in the foremost rank of the souls most agreeable to the Lord. He experienced all the consolations that the testimony of a spotless conscience gives; in him was fulfilled in an ineffable manner that maxim of Jesus Christ: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.**

He saw the Son of God on this earth, where that divine Saviour gave him all the proofs of the greatest love; he sees him now in glory, where his chastity has placed him in the rank of the seraphim, the first among the virgins spoken of in the Apocalypse † who have never sullied their robes of innocence, who follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and can alone sing the canticle by which they bless and do homage to him for the lily of their chastity.

APPLICATION.

Let us remember that Jesus Christ, our divine Master, finds his delight only among the lilies; that no

* St. Matt. v. 8. † Apoc. xiv. 3, 4.

hearts are agreeable to him but such as, like that of St. Joseph are open to no inordinate affection.

Let us remember that chastity belongs essentially to our state, and that it is the object of our most sacred promises. Let there, therefore, be no negligence on that head. God, in giving us the grace of our vocation, gave us that of great purity. Let us strive, then, to correspond to it, and, for that purpose, let us imitate St. Joseph in the precaution with which he guarded that virtue. Let us excite ourselves thereto by the thought of the advantages that chastity procures.

Oh how happy are those who keep themselves pure! how powerful they are over the heart of Jesus! What graces they obtain during the course of their lives! With what consolations God favors them! How they congratulate themselves on their watchfulness when they come to the end of their career, and, seeing the hour of death approach, say to themselves: "Why should I fear? He before whom I am about to appear is the same one who taught that maxim on which I found my dearest hopes: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*"

PRAYER.

Glorious St. Joseph, who have been chosen by God to be the nursing father of the Word made flesh, the faithful spouse of the most holy Virgin, and the guardian of her chastity! obtain for us from the Father a perfect submission to his holy will; from the Son, the study of his divine mysteries; and from the Holy Ghost, purity of heart and body, and an entire fidelity to his graces.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph excelled in chastity, because he had the fear of God, and observed his holy law faithfully;....because he was prudent, and surrounded himself with the most useful precautions.

Joseph excelled in chastity, because he had received the grace of it in an eminent degree, with a view to the great things for which God destined him.

What must have been the purity of him who was to become the worthy spouse of the immaculate Virgin!....

How holy must he have been who was to have the most intimate relations with the holy God!....

Joseph excelled in chastity, because he came under the whole influence of Mary, and still more of Jesus, that divine Sun from whom all sanctity radiates....

Oh how happy must Joseph have been to practice in all its perfection the virtue of purity! It was the source of his prerogatives—the reason why God glorified it in him, by giving him the first place among the virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth....

FRUITS.—To watch over our senses, and more especially our eyes; to honor St Joseph as the patron of pure souls; to pray to him with great fervor—above all, in times of temptation.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

HUMILITY OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."—St. Matt. xi. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

No one, next to Mary, understood better than St. Joseph the necessity and advantages of humility, because no one possessed more of the spirit of our divine Saviour. It will be, then, very advantageous to us especially, who, by our state, should only act according to the teachings of our adorable Master, to consider in its power and effects the humility of St. Joseph.

Joseph was humble, because he possessed in an eminent degree the virtue of justice, and consequently was born with his whole heart to acknowledge that glory is due to God alone, and that man is by himself only misery and nothingness.

Joseph was humble, because he made himself faithful to grace. To accomplish his most admirable designs, the Lord wishes only such souls as do not attribute the glory of it to themselves. On that account he predisposed St. Joseph, whom he destined for the greatest, the most glorious, and the most important mission next to what was to be fulfilled by the most holy Virgin, by a most profound humility. Now, that faithful servant of the Most High perfectly corresponded

to the graces with which the Holy Ghost favored him for that end. Therefore, he excelled in humility.

Joseph was humble, because he understood the humility of Mary. How, in fact, must his heart have been closed against every sentiment of vainglory when he beheld the Virgin-Mother of God putting herself in subjection to him, calling herself only the handmaid of the Lord, humbling herself before all, and concealing in the depths of her soul the secret of the most distinguished heavenly favors?

Joseph was humble, because he contemplated with the most excellent dispositions of heart the humiliations of the Son of God. Ah! who shall tell us what sentiments were awakened in his soul when he beheld the Child Jesus, and said to himself: "Here is my God, the Eternal Word, equal to the Father, who became that little Child I beheld in the crib, while I saw his tears flow?" Oh how at these thoughts could his heart have any other desire than to humble himself at the sight of a God so humbled!

But let us not confine ourselves to contemplating the humility of St. Joseph in its source. Let us see it also in its effects.

Joseph had many claims upon what is called glory. A descendant of the royal race of David; virtuous as God required of him; respected, and even venerated by the blessed Spirits; spouse of the Queen of heaven and earth; nursing father of Jesus, and, as such, more favored than ever anything of this world was, since he had under his authority, or, rather, under his care and protection, the King of kings, the Lord of lords,—what grounds had he not to esteem himself?

But that worthy spouse of Mary does not stop to consider any of these titles, or, if he considers them, it is only to take occasion from thence to glorify God, and humble himself before men.

No shadow of vanity darkened his mind, or was expressed upon his countenance. Let us open the Gospel. We do not hear him say even a word. His humility led him not only to attribute none of the prerogatives he possessed to himself, but it made him preserve, as to these very prerogatives, a modest silence. He does not say one word of the astonishing prodigies that were revealed to him, nor of the sublimity of the office he exercised. He conceals beneath an impenetrable veil all that could attract to him the esteem of men; but he does not conceal from himself that he was the object of the special predilection of God, but he is eager to pay homage for it to his goodness. He unites himself with Mary in magnifying God, because he had regarded the humility of his servant.

He reflects on what he is of himself, and on the great things to which God, nevertheless, destined him, and then he expresses his astonishment. Who will tell us what passed in his soul, when he considered that the Emmanuel was confided to his care, and dwelt with him? Ah! if the Centurion of the Gospel said to Jesus, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof*,* what must have been in secret the language of St. Joseph? How many a time must he have repeated: *What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?*† Why have you come to dwell in the house of your poor holy

* St. Matt. viii. 8. † Ps. viii. 5.

servant?....I was not worthy even to appear in your presence, and, behold, you have become my adopted Son, and I hear you give me the sweet name of father!

The humility of St. Joseph which thus led him to acknowledge the graces of God, inspired in him equally perfect resignation in the condition in which he was placed. Stricken by misfortune, this son of David was reduced to be no more than a poor artisan, working every day to gain sustenance for the morrow, gaining by great fatigue the wages necessary for his sustenance. He has no abode but a humble cottage, where nothing speaks of his distinguished origin, and where he leads only a poor, suffering, obscure life. Many of his neighbors have no regard for him. He passes his days in his modest workshop, where he gives himself up to the most painful labors; but he does not complain; and even it seems to him that his humiliations are nothing compared to those of Jesus and Mary. Therefore, he submits with joy to all the humiliations of his condition. The more he reflects that Providence has humbled him by the circumstances that have reduced him to the condition of a poor artisan, the more he humbled himself in spirit and in heart, so as better to correspond to the views of God.

But not only does his humility inspire him with resignation, it leads him, moreover, to rejoice in his lowliness in the eyes of men; it makes him understand how advantageous it is to be forgotten by them—forsaken, and even despised, for he turns his soul wholly towards God alone. He also makes that a subject of thanksgiving which appears a subject of

pain, and cries out, with David, "*It is good for me that thou hast humbled me.** I know that the more humble before you is he that adores you, the more agreeable is his homage, and the more you open to him the treasure of your mercies."

APPLICATION.

It is we, above all, Brothers of the Christian Schools, who ought to imitate the humility of St. Joseph. Our mission is, in one sense, like his; it has nothing dazzling in the eyes of men, and seems to ask their esteem the less the more important the good is that it seeks to realize.

Let us, therefore, enter upon the practice of this virtue; and to excite ourselves to it, let us meditate frequently upon the humiliation of the Son of God, the mysteries of his Childhood, and those of his passion. Let us meditate upon them, also, in the sacrament of his love, where he has humbled himself so as to conceal himself under the appearance of bread; and assuredly no vainglory could arise in our hearts, astonished at the humility of Him who alone has a right to be glorified!

Let us think, moreover, that by humility we shall obtain the most precious favors of Heaven; we shall work great good among our pupils; we shall advance the work of our perfection; we shall merit more and more the heavenly glory with which God recompenses all those who, in imitation of St. Joseph, have aspired only to humility, so as to render a most worthy homage of adoration to his sovereign Majesty.

* Ps. cxviii. 71.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who wert the most humble of God's servants! we entreat you to obtain for us the virtue of humility, so that we may pay a worthy homage to that sovereign Lord, and that we may merit to be, one day, with you, the object of his eternal mercies.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider the humility of St. Joseph in its source and in its effects....

Joseph was humble, because he was just—that is to say, rendering to God the glory that is due to him, and acknowledging that man has nothing of himself....

Joseph was humble, because he was faithful to grace; ....because he understood the humility of Mary;....because he meditated with faith and love on the humiliations of the Incarnate Word....

At the sight of his God thus humbling himself, what could he desire but to humble himself with him, to pay him a worthy homage of adoration?

The humility of St. Joseph led him to seek in nothing the esteem of men. He had many titles to that esteem; but he set no account on them. He wishes but one thing —to glorify the God of heaven, and to be unknown upon earth.

The humility of St. Joseph leads him to be perfectly resigned to his condition of the artisan,....to take occasion from it to bless and thank Providence.

Thus, that virtue is to him a source of great graces, by which he makes himself more and more worthy of the favors with which God recompenses those who forget themselves to please him.

FRUITS.—To avoid speaking of ourselves; to desire no other position than that in which Providence has placed us; to meditate often on the acts of the humility of the Incarnate Word.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

THE POVERTY OF ST. JOSEPH.

"I am poor, and in labors from my youth."—Ps. lxxxvii. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

As the virtue of poverty makes part of our strictest obligations, it will be very advantageous to us to consider how far our glorious patron practiced it, and to learn from him what is true poverty of mind and heart.

Let us consider, then, to-day the poverty of St. Joseph in itself, the esteem he entertained for it, the dispositions with which he supported its hardships.

Joseph could, in all truth, make use of those words of David: *I am poor, and in labors from my youth.* His family, formerly rich, had fallen from its ancient splendor through the unfavorableness of the times, and had been reduced to a state bordering on destitution. "That great servant of God," says St. Francis of of Sales, "was poor all his life, and in poverty, despised, rejected, and in want of necessaries. He was looked upon as a poor carpenter, who, though laboring assiduously for the support of the Holy Family, could not rise so high as not to want many things necessary."

His name only reminded one of a poor mechanic; his house seemed the very abode of poverty; all the districts through which he travelled saw him in poverty. At Bethlehem, his poverty closed the inns against him,

and left him free admittance only to an abandoned stable; at Jerusalem, his poverty left him only a poor offering to repurchase the Child Jesus; in Egypt, it condemned him to incessant labor, and, according to many authors, to the sight of Jesus and Mary suffering from hunger, without having it in his power to procure them necessaries.

Behold, what was the poverty of Joseph. Let us reflect now on the esteem in which he held it.

Joseph looks upon poverty with the eyes of faith, and therefore appreciates it as most excellent and supremely advantageous.

He understood in the beginning that riches are snares for the soul; that not only are they the source of a thousand troubles, but that they cherish and excite avarice—a passion that is the parent of so many evils—which turns man aside, from his end, which keeps him bowed down to the earth, without allowing him to raise his soul to his heavenly country. Joseph then could see in poverty only a deliverer that frees us from our fetters, and he esteemed it consequently as a signal grace of Providence. On that account, when, through his natural qualities and his high birth, he might have aspired to a higher condition in the eyes of the world, he chose to be a simple artisan, who can provide the necessaries of life only by incessant toil.

Joseph appreciates poverty, because he knows that God himself appreciates it. He understands that it is a source of the greatest graces, and the cause of the choice that was made of him to be the nursing-father of the Son of God. Joseph heard in the depths of

his soul that invitation which St. Liguori places in the mouth of God the Father: "I have sent my Son upon earth, O Joseph, and I have sent him poor, humble, without the pomp of riches or outward dignities; therefore, he will be despised in the world, and, because of your profession, called the son of a carpenter. I have wished that you should be poor, because I destined you to take the place of father to my Son, poor as yourself."

But the principal reason why St. Joseph esteemed poverty was because he saw it honored above all praise by Jesus Christ himself.

Ah! how could he but appreciate it, since the divine Master, to whom he had so great a resemblance, preferred it to all the riches of the world. He came from heaven to earth to espouse it; and desired only a poor mother, a poor foster-father, and called upon the poor to be his first adorers.

How St. Joseph esteemed poverty when he recalled to mind the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, and said to himself: "I was very poor in my small house in Nazareth; nevertheless, I was not sufficiently poor to please my divine Saviour. He wished to be born at Bethlehem; at the time when I was poorest, and to have no other palace than a stable, and no other bed than a manger."

Moreover, all the relations of St. Joseph with his divine adopted Son were of a nature to make him esteem poverty. When he beheld him in his poverty—when he saw him stretch out his divine hands to ask a little bread—when he said to himself, "The Lord is seated at the table of the poor, and has chosen the

last place among the poor"—when he reflected that he who could have all things, wished to have absolutely nothing, he must have been persuaded more and more that poverty is a hidden and inappreciable treasure, and have had a presentiment that the divine Master would, one day, extol it, by saying to those who practiced it with faith: *Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.**

Joseph, therefore, esteemed poverty in the highest degree; moreover, he constantly glorified God in the privations it imposed upon him.

The poverty of Joseph was to him a source of incessant sufferings. It obliged him to constant labor all his life; it often left him a prey to the severities of hunger; it drew upon him slights and contempt on the part of men. It was to him, above all, a cause of heart-break in the privations it imposed upon Jesus and Mary, whom he saw so frequently in want without having it in his power to relieve them. But of whatever kind, and however numerous his sufferings may have been, Joseph, in his poverty, never allowed himself to give way to murmurs and complaints, but always kept himself perfectly resigned. God saw in him the just man tried, but becoming by the trial more and more just, and always ready to repeat in the dispositions of his heart: *Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

APPLICATION.

Are we, in regard to poverty, in the same interior dispositions as St. Joseph? We have more motives for it than he, since it forms an essential part of our obliga-

* St. Luke vi. 20.

tions, which God formally requires of us, and which is one of the essential characters of our state.

Do we look at it from the point of view of faith? Do we esteem it as Jesus Christ esteemed it? Let us love the poor, and be inclined to give all our care to those among our pupils who are in the greatest necessity.

Do we really practice poverty? Have we nothing superfluous—nothing that we keep unknown to our superiors? Do we employ what is for our use only according to the directions of obedience?

What do we do when poverty makes us feel its hardships? Do we think then that God favors us, since it furnishes us with a valuable opportunity of proving our love to him, of weaning our hearts from self-interest and creatures, and increasing our merits for heaven? Let us strive to enter into these dispositions, and, after having asked the grace from God, by the intercession of St. Joseph, let us do all in our power to possess them. Let us attain to that degree of virtue which makes of every trial and every privation an occasion of blessing and glorifying God.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, son of David, who have chosen to be only a poor artisan, obtain for me the grace of loving and esteeming poverty, of supporting all its hardships with faith and patience, of even desiring them so as to make myself, like you, conformable to Jesus Christ, who became poor for love of us, and of meriting, when I leave the world, to hear these words applied to me: *Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider the poverty of St. Joseph, the esteem in which he held it, the dispositions with which he supported its hardships....

Joseph was poor—in abject, despised, necessitous poverty....Let us remember Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Egypt; all these speak of his poverty....

Joseph esteemed poverty, because he looked at it with the eyes of faith....

He considered how advantageous it is to be free from the troubles that the riches of earth give, which are so calculated to excite avarice, and to hinder the soul from rising to God.

Above all, he considered the esteem in which our divine Saviour held poverty, since he wished to be born and to live deprived of every earthly treasure....and to testify in all circumstances his predilection for the poor....

Joseph glorified God in his poverty. It caused him many a privation, occasioned him much suffering of every kind; but he never ceased to bless Providence....

Very far from complaining or murmuring, he made of his poverty an occasion for thanksgiving to God, who proved him, and therefore a source of numberless merits for heaven.

FRUITS.—To esteem poverty; to bless God when he offers us occasions for suffering; to give our care to poor children, and with a special predilection to the most necessitous.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

PATIENCE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"In your patience you shall possess your souls."—St. Luke xxi. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

THE virtue of patience consists in restraining one's self in suffering from supernatural motives—in enduring the many sufferings of this life with calm resignation and confidence in God. Now, it is easy to understand that our holy patron practiced it in an excellent degree.

Joseph enjoyed ineffable consolations; but he also experienced many sufferings. Did he not see his family fallen from its state of prosperity? Was he not obliged to lead a life wholly of labor and self-denial? How many contradictions had that son of David to meet while exercising the humble calling of a carpenter, and placing himself in subjection to those who chose to employ him!

Above all, had he not to suffer after the incarnation of the Son of God? Ah! it was he, indeed, who experienced that wherever Jesus enters he comes with his cross and his crown of thorns. Beginning from the time when the Son of God was committed to his care, was he not tried by constant reverses? Joseph and Mary were poor at Nazareth; still they had a house. Now, when Jesus comes into the world, he has

no house for them, and they are obliged to seek shelter in an abandoned stable. They lived together in their home poorly, but quite content, surmounting their poverty by their courage and constant labor; and, behold, after the coming of Jesus Christ, they are a prey to every kind of misfortune. The life of Joseph appears no other than a series of sufferings, difficulties, and contradictions.

He had, then, much to suffer under all these respects; but whatever were his trials, they could not disturb the peace of his soul. In his sufferings, he adores and blesses the hand of God, from whom he receives good things as well as evil.

Let us, then, admire our glorious patron, practicing with such perfection the virtue of patience; let us congratulate him on having shown himself so great in adversity, and let us seek the source of that strength of soul we recognize in him.

Joseph was patient, because he formed a just idea of things, and because he did not allow himself to give way to any of those exaggerated sentiments that are so frequently the cause of our want of resignation. He was patient, because he was humble of heart, and never gave ear to self-love, which, at bottom, is alone the true cause of our acts of impatience.

Joseph was patient, because he was faithful to grace, which is always proportioned to the greatness of our trials, and because he lived by faith. Convinced that nothing happens to us but what God wills, and that God wills nothing but what is for our good, he saw in the numberless trials he had to undergo only the effects of the divine goodness and the merciful atten-

tion of Providence. He considered, moreover, how great is the patience of God, who maketh his sun rise upon the just and the unjust, and he endeavored to imitate him. Moreover, his faith showed him that heavenly country where the sovereign Master so liberally rewards patient and resigned souls—where every suffering endured for love of him is worth an eternal weight of glory—where a slight sacrifice is recompensed by incomparable felicity.

Joseph was patient, also, in consequence of his relations with Mary, and, above all, with Jesus.

Did he not see his holy spouse suffering with him, like him, and even more than he? Did he not behold at times when, the prophecy of the aged Simeon was in part fulfilled, a sword of sorrow piercing her maternal heart? Now, he always found her perfectly resigned to the Divine will, repeating unceasingly, in her interior dispositions, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to his adorable will." How could his heart, so docile to the influence of that of Mary, fail to share those sentiments of patience and resignation?

Yet the principal source of patience in Joseph sprung from his relations with Jesus. How could his soul but be perfectly resigned to suffer everything, when with his eyes he beheld the state to which his divine Master reduced himself—when he saw God making himself a victim for us, taking on him our infirmities, choosing to follow a career wholly of suffering, resigning himself to undergo every species of contradiction, and showing that he sought only privations and fatigue.

Joseph knew by the prophecies a portion of what Jesus Christ was to suffer during his Passion. The veil of a future that he was not to behold upon this earth was raised from before his eyes, and he was permitted to contemplate the divine Word completing his bloody sacrifice on Calvary. Ah! what passed in his heart when he thought how Jesus had come into this world to be a sign to be contradicted. That, in expiation of our sins, he was to be persecuted, disowned, insulted, treated as the outcast of the people, put in the class of criminals, and deserving, with all truth, to be called *a "Man of sorrows," and acquainted with infirmity?* With what sentiments was he filled, when, beholding the Child Jesus in all the grace of youth, he remembered these passages of the prophecies: *Surely he hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins.**

Evidently, with such thoughts, he must have had a still greater desire to suffer in this world, to be more like to the divine Master, who, for love of us, was to undergo so many sufferings.

Joseph was, then, from motives of faith, a model of patience; consequently, he drew from it the most precious advantages. He found in the exercise of that virtue, peace of soul—an increase of strength and courage that made him superior to all his trials—a source of countless merits for heaven. By it he showed himself a true friend of God, who discerns in

* Isaias liii. 4, 5.

sufferings those who belong sincerely to him, and who cannot suffer himself to be surpassed in generosity.

APPLICATION.

"Poor and wretched ceatures that we are," says St. Francis of Sales, "we can do scarcely any other good in this miserable world than submit to some affliction. When, then, sufferings and labors are offered us, let us accept them willingly from the most loving hand of our God, as if we saw him present—offering ourselves, moreover, to endure still more, if it seems good to him."

Let us enter into the spirit of these words, and make from day to day new progress in the practice of patience. We need it more than others, we religious teachers. Let us draw the grace for that virtue from the same sources as St. Joseph—that is to say, from the spirit of faith, and the desire to make ourselves like to Jesus Christ.

What are our trials in this life, if we compare them with those we deserve to suffer? Sinners worthy of hell, can we find the light cross which Providence apportions to us too heavy?

What are our sufferings, even the greatest, compared with the sufferings of Jesus? What! we are the disciples of the God of Calvary, and we want resignation and patience! What a contradiction!.... Let us cast our eyes on the crucifix; let us think on the sufferings of our adorable Master, and remember that it is only those who resemble him that are admitted into the number of his elect. Let us make it all our study to be patient and resigned, as St. Joseph was; and let us ask of God the grace to be so, by his protection, which has always been extended to us.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who has been so courageous in adversity, obtain for me, I beseech you, the strength of soul necessary to imitate you in that respect. Grant, by your intercession, that all my trials may be to me occasions for blessing Providence, and merit for me that weight of glory which recompenses for eternity the sufferings we endure here below with patience, and for the love of him.

RÉSUMÉ.

Joseph experienced many contradictions in his youth; the ruin of his family occasioned him much suffering.....

He was still more tried from the time of the incarnation of the Son of God.....

But he remains always patient and resigned.....

Let us reflect on what was the source of that strength of soul he possessed.

Joseph was patient, because he had formed to himself a just idea of things;....because he was humble;....because he was faithful to actual graces, which God proportions to our trials.....He was patient, because he looked at everything from the point of view of faith.....

Joseph was patient, because he shared the same sentiments as Mary;....but, above all, because he studied to make himself like to Jesus.....

Joseph saw Jesus suffer, and he foresaw what would be the sacrifice of Calvary. An imitator of Jesus, he could not but be a perfect model of patience.

FRUITS.—To pray to God when any affliction comes upon us; to think that we are very far from suffering as much as our sins deserve; to look with faith upon the crucifix, and compare our sufferings with those which Jesus endured for us.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

OBEDIENCE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"An obedient man shall speak of victory."—Prov. xxi. 28.

CONSIDERATION.

WITHOUT obedience, says St. Theresa, there are no religious. It is, then, the essential virtue of our state, and consequently the one we should, above all, endeavor to acquire. On that account it will be exceedingly advantageous to us to meditate on the obedience of St. Joseph, and consider how pure and holy it was in its source, generous in its practice, and marvellous in its effects. We shall thus learn from that excellent model from what motives we should obey, how we should obey, and what advantages we should hope for as fruits of our obedience.

St. Joseph was obedient, because he was intimately persuaded that man is upon earth only to do the will of God; because he recognized that will in the will of those whom Providence had placed over him; because he desired with his whole heart to pay God a worthy homage through the sacrifices of his judgment and his will; because he strove to make himself like to Jesus Christ, after the example of Mary, with whom he could contemplate that divine model for so many years. Ah! how could he but have the greatest esteem for obedience, when he saw Jesus Christ make himself obedient

to all, submissive to him, anticipate his wishes, and execute faithfully and readily all that he commanded.

Behold the principal reasons why Joseph obeyed. His views were great and supernatural, because all had relation to God. Let us reflect now on the manner of his obedience, and understand how one who is truly obedient ought to act.

Joseph obeys always, because the motives of his obedience being of a supernatural and unchangeable order, were always equally powerful, and even more and more so, upon his heart.

Joseph obeys everything commanded him. His obedience, owing to the disposition in which he is, embraces all that it may please God to command, and extends to things to come, even to such as are merely possible. That faithful servant of the Most High persevered in the most perfect docility of heart, repeating interiorly these words of Samuel: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.** His whole thought was to listen to the divine inspiration, and follow its movements. Obedience was his element, his consolation, his happiness. He does not want for a formal order; a sign is enough for him; he only requires to know what God wishes of him, and immediately he is ready to do it.

Joseph obeys generously, without considering what it may cost him to do what is commanded. He sacrifices to obedience his rest, his time, his property, his country—all for which he could have any affection upon earth.

Joseph obeys with simplicity. He is commanded to

* 1 Sam. iii. 9.

go from Nazareth to Bethlehem; he submits without making any observation either on his poverty, or on the condition of Mary, or on the length and difficulties of the journey. An angel tells him to take the Child and his Mother, and go into Egypt; he shows the same submission. Without alleging any pretext, without offering any delay, he arises and sets out with the Infant Jesus and the most holy Virgin. He does the same when he is told to return to the land of Israel. We see that the wish to execute the orders of God, whatever they may be, is, as it were, the foundation of his obedience.

Oh! how admirable is this simplicity of obedience in St. Joseph! Many saints have made strong remonstrances against being burdened with the responsibilities of authority; they have accepted, as if by a kind of force, the dignities to which Providence called them. It was not so that St. Joseph acted. Although the most humble of the servants of God, nevertheless, he loved obedience more than humility. Therefore, when God the Father appoints him to have authority over the Queen of heaven and even Jesus himself, he accepts the charge without making any remonstrance; he goes down, it is true, into his own nothingness, acknowledging himself unworthy to be even the slave of the august persons over whom God places him; but he is resigned to be their superior, and to exercise the duties of head of the Holy Family.

Behold to what a degree St. Joseph carried holy obedience. Let us not be astonished that it produced in him the most marvellous effects. Let us recall to mind some of them, so that we may understand how

advantageous it is for man to be perfectly submissive to God.

Joseph, by his obedience, enjoyed in this world great peace of mind. He reposed all his cares on Him whose adorable will he was fulfilling. He always said: "I study, O my God, to do only what you command me. The care of the issue rests with you alone."

Joseph, by his obedience, always pleased God, who esteems nothing so much on earth as souls submissive to his will. Oh! how this good Master loved him! How many graces, consequently, he gave him. To these, by the very effect of that virtue which obtained them for him, he corresponded faithfully, and drew down, moreover, a multitude of others.

Joseph, by his obedience, formed himself to the resemblance of Jesus Christ, and thereby acquired the rights which alone give us admittance to the kingdom of heaven. He went on from grace to grace, from merit to merit. Every day saw him more pleasing to God than the day previous, until that last day of his holy life arrived, when he went to put the crown to the edifice of his sanctity, by dying in dispositions of perfect obedience.

APPLICATION.

We religious have the most numerous, the most urgent reasons to make us perfectly obedient. Let us enter, then, resolutely on that path.

Let us esteem obedience—that virtue which the saints have so much esteemed, and which Jesus Christ has taught us in so excellent a manner. Let us often cast our eyes on that adorable model. When we consider

him entering into this world, saying to his Father, "I come to do thy will;" when we see him so submissive to St. Joseph and the most holy Virgin; when we remember that he was *obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross,** we should feel ourselves impelled to the exact and constant practice of that sublime virtue?

Let us draw it from the same sources as St. Joseph, and keep it with the same fidelity. Yes, let us be truly obedient; let us be such always and in all things; let us be such from motives of faith; let us be such, whatever it may cost us. Let us obey promptly, simply, and generously. Then we shall be sure that we shall please God; that we shall receive the most singular graces; that we shall form ourselves to the likeness of Jesus, and that by continuing on this path we shall arrive at that happy goal where the Christian celebrates his victory in the courts of the heavenly Jerusalem.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who has so perfectly reproduced in your conduct the characteristics of that of Jesus Christ, obtain for me that I may imitate you as much as my divine Master requires. Grant, by your intercession, that I may become, after his example, truly obedient, so that my soul may be pleasing in his eyes, and that he may deign to admit me to celebrate with you in heaven the victory which those will celebrate there who shall have practiced from motives of faith the virtue of obedience.

* Philippians ii. 8.

RÉSUMÉ.

Obedience belongs to the very essence of a religious life....

We ought, then, to use every effort to excel in the practice of that virtue....

To assist ourselves in this, let us meditate on the obedience of St. Joseph, and consider how pure and holy it was in its motives, perfect in its practice, and profitable in its results.

Joseph obeyed through a desire to please God.... through esteem for obedience;....he obeyed with a resolute will to make himself like to Jesus Christ....What an influence the example of the obedience of Jesus exercised upon his soul!....

Joseph obeyed always, and in all things....Joseph obeyed promptly and generously—sacrificing to obedience his rest, his life, all that he had, seeking his own interest in nothing.

Joseph obeyed with simplicity, he made no observation, whatever was commanded him....

Oh, how profitable such an obedience must have been! By it he pleased God....imitated Jesus Christ....merited numberless graces....advanced from virtue to virtue till he attained to perfection....gained the throne of glory, which he now occupies in heaven.

FRUITS.—To meditate often on the obedience of Jesus; to make no observations on what is commanded us; to ask, through the intercession of St. Joseph, to excel in obedience.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

INTERIOR LIFE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"I lifted up my hands to thy commandments, which I loved: and I was exercised in thy justification."—Ps. cxviii. 48.

CONSIDERATION.

THE interior life, as the masters of the spiritual life teach us, consists essentially in the greatest separation possible from the world, and in a close union with God through all our faculties. Now, it is sufficient to have defined it, to understand that St. Joseph excelled therein.

In truth, that holy patriarch had none but the most indispensable intercourse with the world—such as was necessary for the duties of his state, and to relieve the wants of the Holy Family. Never was he seen to seek or take part in frivolous amusements. What he loved was retirement and silence, which alone favor union with God. Moreover, did he not know by the Holy Scripture that God is not in the tumult, that fervor grows weak in the company of people of the world, and that the soul loses so much more of its supernatural life the more it places itself in intercourse with outward things?

Besides, what had he to do with this world of misery, he who occupied by his mission and his merits so distinguished a rank in the world of grace? Of what importance were the affairs of time to him, who

was in relation of the greatest intimacy with the Eternal God?

Joseph, therefore, practiced in an excellent manner separation from the people of the world; he practiced equally well union with God, which constitutes the second element of the interior life.

Persuaded of this great principle, established equally by reason and faith, that we have our life and faculties only for God, Joseph, from his infancy, made it his principal occupation to think of God, to love God, to wish what God wishes—that is to say, to study always to be united to God in soul and heart.

But how strongly was he incited to this when he lived in the company of the most holy Virgin, and afterwards in that of Jesus Christ himself! Mary meditated unceasingly on the mysteries of the divine Infancy, in which, after God, she had the greatest share. Joseph imitated her in this respect, because, though in a far less degree, he had the same motives. His heart was, therefore, occupied with Jesus. When he could, he contemplated with the eyes of his body his adorable Saviour; and when separated from him, he nourished his mind with a remembrance so sweet and consoling.

Joseph studied the Word of God in his hidden life. He asked himself on what his soul meditated; and knowing that it was constantly admiring the greatness of God, and considering the moral miseries of fallen humanity and the means to restore it to its rights, he studied to occupy his understanding with the same objects—to be employed interiorly on the same subjects on which the soul of Jesus Christ was employed.

Joseph united himself to God in his sentiments in a no less excellent way. Ah! was it not he, above all, who could repeat these words of David: *For what have I in heaven, and besides thee what do I desire upon earth?** Let us remember that his heart burned with the same flames as those of Jesus and Mary; that it never turned towards the things of earth; that it loved but Jesus, and what Jesus loved.

Moreover, what else could Joseph love, since, in truth, there is nothing truly amiable but Jesus, and what Jesus loves? And how could his heart take any other direction when the divine Being, for whom alone we are created, was so near, and exercised all his influence upon his soul? How could he help living in the exercise of pure love, when the God of love was under his eyes, and faith showed him his adorable perfections?

Joseph was, then, united to God, not only by his thoughts, but by his sentiments. His affections, his views, his wishes all tended to Jesus alone. His soul was placed in an interior solitude, where it had no attraction but Jesus, no conversation but with Jesus. Disengaged from all attachment to creatures, it rose, as it were, naturally towards the things of heaven, and found its repose in the contemplation of its beloved Saviour. This was manifested exteriorly. The look, bearing, tone of the voice, and words, revealed it in Joseph; everything in him announced a soul that wished and sought for God alone.

Joseph had too much intercourse with Jesus and Mary not to live that interior life. If he listened, it

* Ps. lxxii. 25.

was to the voice of Jesus or Mary; if he spoke, it was to Jesus or Mary; if he worked, it was in presence of Jesus and Mary; if he took his frugal repast, if he gave himself any relaxation, if he journeyed, it was with Jesus and Mary. Let us not be astonished, then, that he excelled in the interior life, since he had in Jesus and Mary its perfect models, and the subjects to which Christian souls ought, above all, to apply all their faculties.

Finally, let us consider that Joseph found the greatest advantages in the exercises of an interior life, for by their means he became from day to day more detached from the world, and more united to God. He sanctified all his actions, and gave even to his labor the merit of a prayer in the eyes of God. He drew down graces always increasing in greatness, and experienced sometimes ineffable consolations.

What were the transports of his holy soul at the contemplation of the Word of God—a little child confided to his care, or a simple workman laboring with himself! With what delights did he not feel himself inundated, when he saw himself the object of the attention, the looks, the eager care of his Saviour! Then, indeed, might he have used these words of the Canticles: *My soul melted when he spoke.**

But let us remark that St. Joseph did not always experience such consolations, which, moreover, are not essential to an interior life. Often, indeed, he was deprived of sensible graces, and felt the pain the absence of Jesus causes to the soul. But let us not forget that he drew all the advantages which the exercise of an

* Cant. v. 6.

interior life produce, when they are done as they ought to be—advantages which result to advancement in perfection, to progressive approach, to that state in which God wishes us to be before judging us worthy to share in his eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

Let us give ourselves up, as much as possible, to the exercises of an interior life. Let us shun the world. We are separated from it by answering to our vocation; let us, then, remain separated.

Let us lead a life of retirement and silence. Let us not communicate with persons outside but from pure necessity, and then let us do it briefly and with edification.

Let us honor St. Joseph as the patron of interior souls, and, consequently: 1st, let us meditate on him frequently, to form our conduct by his; 2d, let us address ourselves to him with confidence, and beg of him to obtain for us the grace of loving retirement and silence, and of persevering, or rather of progressing, in union with God, in the application of our mind and heart to Jesus Christ, and what has reference to him; 3d, if we are in suffering, or spiritual aridity, let us have recourse to St. Joseph, for he has at his disposal the particular graces we stand in need of in that state. We shall obtain, by his intercession, the enjoyment again of all the advantages of an interior life, and even the having thereby a foretaste of the ineffable delights with which God recompenses in heaven those who when on earth made it their study to detach their hearts from creatures to be united to him.

PRAYER.

We cannot, O holy Joseph, attain to the sublime state of detachment and contemplation to which it pleased God to raise you. That which is in our power, and to which we ought to tend, is to imitate you, by keeping ourselves separated from the world, and united to God in spirit and heart. Obtain for us that we may live an interior life, and grant that our souls, by their union with Jesus, may be made worthy to be admitted to contemplate him, one day, with you in his glory.

RÉSUMÉ.

The interior life consists: 1st, in retirement and silence; 2d, in union with God in mind and heart. Now it is sufficient to have defined it to understand that St. Joseph excelled therein.

Joseph has no intercourse with the world but what was indispensable;....he remains but a short time;.... he hastens to return to his home, where he finds Jesus and Mary....

Joseph observes silence, so as to hear the interior voice of grace....the words of edification of the most holy Virgin....the teachings of Jesus....

Joseph makes it his study to think of God and the things of God;....like Mary, he meditates on the great mysteries that are wrought beneath his eyes, and in which he has so large a share....

Joseph finds in that separation from the world and that application to God, in union with Jesus and Mary, the greatest advantages, progress in perfection,....increase of merits,....interior consolations,....strength of soul under trials....

FRUITS.—To keep silence; to shun the world; to be very faithful to prayer.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION.

PRUDENCE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"A faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath set over his family."
—St. Matt. xxiv. 45.

CONSIDERATION.

We cannot doubt that God, who wished to entrust Jesus and Mary to Joseph, who destined him to be the guardian of those priceless treasures, communicated to him in its fulness the spirit of prudence, as he had done to Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was yet called to a mission far less important.

St. Joseph was the one of all just men who was to represent most perfectly the guidance of Providence. Now Providence acts with number, weight and measure; it ordains all with a view to the end proposed, or, in other words, it does nothing but according to the rules of prudence. Joseph was the worthy steward of the divine Father of the family. He ought, then, to excel in prudence, to discern what was profitable or hurtful to the interests of his Master, what to make use of or abstain from.

Let us consider him, to-day, in the exercise of that virtue, and learn from his conduct what we ought to do so that it may be said of us that we are truly prudent and faithful servants.

Joseph, from a spirit of prudence, takes as his guide the great principles of faith. Persuaded that he was

created only for God, he esteems, seeks, and employs only such means as are of a nature to lead him to God.

Joseph, from a spirit of prudence, watches over himself, so as never to make but a holy use of his senses and other faculties. He remembers that the sovereign Master will, one day, exact from all his servants an account of the talents entrusted to them, and which they ought to have made use of for his glory.

Joseph, from a spirit of prudence, makes a wise use of his time. Every moment of a life so precious is to him an occasion for advancing in the path of holiness, and acquiring merits for heaven. He is perfectly faithful to grace, because he knows that that fidelity determines the measure of eternal happiness with which God rewards his elect. By retirement, he keeps his soul attentive to what the Holy Ghost says to him in the depths of his heart, and the more he hears that salutary voice, the greater is his docility in listening to it.

Joseph, from a spirit of prudence, prefers in everything that which can lead him most surely to God. On that account he chooses to be poor as to the things of this world; to exercise no profession but one without honor before man; to remain hidden and unknown; to live in forgetfulness of all, knowing that the soul in that state has much more facility for uniting itself to God. From the same cause, he follows the heavenly inspiration which leads him to make a vow of virginity, and consecrate himself body and soul to the service of the thrice-holy God, saying to him, like David: *Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.** He binds himself to lead an angelic life upon

* Ps. lxxii. 26.

earth ; to preserve his chastity inviolate ; strengthening himself against every temptation to inconstancy by a sacred promise, solemn and irrevocable.

Joseph, from a spirit of prudence, endeavors to arrive at perfection; tends towards perfect holiness; always goes beyond mere obligation, knowing that to be generous towards God is the surest means of attracting his graces towards us, and having a share in his liberalities.

But not only does Joseph make a wise use of the means calculated to lead him to God, he takes precautions, moreover, against everything that could be a danger or an obstacle to him in attaining that end. Acting always from a spirit of prudence, he remains as much as possible in retirement; shuns the world, so dangerous to innocence; detaches himself from it in mind and heart; remains indifferent to its pomps and a stranger to its joys—testifying thereby that he understood all the truth of this maxim of Holy Scripture: *He who loves the danger shall perish in it.**

Joseph, then, excelled in prudence even before becoming the spouse of Mary; how much more when he was united to her whom the Church styles "Most prudent Virgin." It was then, above all, that he perfectly understood, by the example and words of his most holy spouse, what means those who sincerely wish to be united to God make use of, and with what precautions they surround themselves to preserve in their hearts, the fire of his holy love in all its purity.

But let us see him in the exercise of his charge as nursing-father to the Child Jesus. How is his pru-

* Eccles. iii. 27.

dence manifested? Does it not seem as if he had addressed to God the Father these words of the patriarch Juda: *I take the boy upon me, require him at my hand?** With what care he watches over Jesus! What precautions he takes to avert danger from him! As far as the obligations of his state allow, he never turns his thoughts from him; his intellect is employed in thinking what he ought to do for the preservation of the divine Child. Let us remember the difficulties he encountered because of his poverty and the persecutions of Herod, and how he surmounted them in the most perfect manner. Let us recall to mind, above all, his flight into Egypt, which presented so many dangers, and his return to Israel, where he settled at Nazareth, out of the jurisdiction of Archelaus, and let us be convinced that God gives us in our glorious patron a perfect model of prudence.

Therefore, when the Gospel asks, "Who is the faithful and prudent servant to whom the Lord has entrusted the care of his house?" we may answer with all certainty that that servant is Joseph. It was he, above all, who knew and did the will of the divine Master, who prepared for those of his family what was necessary for them, and guarded faithfully the deposit committed to his care.

APPLICATION.

To us, also, God has committed a precious deposit. That deposit is, in the first place, our own soul, with the graces necessary to make it worthy of its eternal destiny; and next the souls of our pupils. Now, what

* Gen. xliii. 9.

can there be on earth of so great a value, or which should so much concern us?

It is necessary for us, then, to excel in prudence. Should not each of us, religious and teachers, be that faithful and prudent servant of whom the Gospel speaks, and of whom God has given us in the person of St. Joseph a perfect model? How many dangers in a spiritual light we run! What precautions we should, then, make use of to fence us round, and keep us pure; to preserve us in fervor; to prevent the world, with its perverse spirit, from entering into our communities!

What precautions are necessary for us, in our relations with our pupils, that we may not find danger in the very exercise of our duty! What prudence we need to be always edifying in their eyes; to say nothing and do nothing that could be hurtful to them!

No, none have more need than we of prudence. We must, then, after having asked the grace of God through the intercession of St. Joseph, apply ourselves without ceasing, to acquire a virtue so necessary, and without which we should only endanger our relations with our pupils, and even our own salvation.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who wert the prudent servant whom God placed over his house, remember that I belong to that house of the Lord, and that I have, above all, need of that prudence which I admire in thee. Deign, then, I beseech thee, to obtain it for me by your intercession, that I may labor in safety for my own salvation, and that of the souls confided to me.

RÉSUMÉ.

The prudent man discerns and chooses what is best calculated to unite him to God, our only end.

How prudent Joseph was!....what a holy use he made of his senses and other faculties!....what a prudent employment he made of his time, always so precious!....how great was his fidelity to grace!....

In all things he preferred what led him most surely to God....

Joseph, through prudence, places himself by vow under the impossibility of giving himself to the world. He prevents all inconstancy by a sacred and irrevocable promise never to belong to any but God....

Joseph, through prudence, lives in retirement, separated in mind and heart from the world, so full of dangers. He watches over his senses, and particularly his eyes....he remains in the company of Jesus and Mary....he employs himself in nothing but what has reference to his obligations....

How many precautions he takes that no misfortune may happen to the divine Infant entrusted to his care!....

What a beautiful model he offers us in his own person, to us who are religious teachers, and on whom everything makes it imperative that we should excel in prudence....

FRUITS.—To employ our time well; to observe modesty in our looks; to follow all that is prescribed in the essay on school government, under the chapter on Prudence.

THIRTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

GRATITUDE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me?"—Ps. cxv. 12.

CONSIDERATION.

Called to the religious life by a singular and wholly gratuitous grace, we should make ourselves highly culpable in the eyes of God if we did not oblige ourselves to testify to him our lively and sincere gratitude, or, rather, if that virtue did not exist in us in an eminent degree. Let us, then, apply all our energies to develope it in our hearts, and to excite it in us. Let us consider why and how St. Joseph practiced it. Let us see the motives, the object, and the acts of his gratitude towards God.

St. Joseph was grateful, because his soul was enlightened, his heart humble and upright. He understood, on one hand, the greatness and excellence of the gifts of God; and, on the other, looking upon himself as without any merit of his own, he made of each of these gifts an occasion to glorify the goodness and generosity of their Author.

St. Joseph was grateful, because his heart was more than any other like to the heart of Mary. Ah! what must have been the gratitude of that glorious Virgin when she looked upon the singular graces, the privileges without number, with which God had favored

her. When she understood that the angel of God could say to her in all truth: *Hail, full of grace.* Yes, that virtue was in her as sublime as her purity and her humility. Besides, we have an admirable proof of it in the *Magnificat*—that sublime canticle wherein she glorifies the God of goodness for the favors he had heaped upon her.

Now, St. Joseph, a constant witness of the actions of Mary, could not but admire and imitate her gratitude. He also excelled in that virtue, and he said in his own manner: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, for he hath regarded the humility of his poor servant; he who is almighty hath wrought great things in me, and holy is his name."

Joseph found a still greater motive for gratitude in his desire to make himself like to Jesus Christ. That holy patriarch saw in the victims of the old law, types of the only true Victim by whom the world was to be saved. Now, a great number among those were eucharistic, being offered up principally to thank God for his graces. Consequently, he understood by them that the great mission of Jesus Christ was not only to blot out the sins of the world, but to acknowledge worthily the blessings of God. He understood this, above all, when he studied the heart of the divine Saviour, and considered what place gratitude occupied there. To what perfection, then, did he carry it so as to make himself like to that adorable Model!

Such was the gratitude of Joseph, considered in its motives. Let us reflect now on what was the subject of it.

Joseph was grateful for the blessings in the natural

order which he had received from Providence. Reflecting on the care which God had taken of him, he blessed him for his kindness shown to him.

Persuaded, however, that the visible world is but an image of the invisible one, and a means to conduct us thither, Joseph appreciated the least spiritual favors infinitely more than temporal ones. Oh, who will give us to know the sentiments with which his soul was penetrated, when he considered with what graces God had enriched him; when he remembered that he was more favored than had been the patriarchs and prophets; when he saw himself raised to the dignity of spouse of Mary; when he contemplated the Incarnate Word placed under his authority, confided to his care, obeying him as a most tender and most respectful Son? Such favors called for and produced in his heart, so well disposed, a gratitude without limits.

But St. Joseph was grateful, not merely for the favors of which he was personally the object. He had too much charity not to consider as if they were his own, those favors which Providence granted to others. On that account, he thanked God for the natural blessings, and, above all, for the blessings in the order of grace of which they were the object. When he saw the Sun of justice arise on the world, plunged then in the darkness of sin, he eagerly thanked God for it in the name of all humanity, which was still ignorant of that ineffable favor.

St. Joseph found the greatest subject for thanksgiving in the prerogatives of his most holy spouse. Who will give us to understand how he thanked the Holy Ghost, who had adorned her with all the sanctity possible for

a creature, and had made her worthy of all the veneration of men and angels!

St. Joseph was, then, grateful, above all, for the blessings bestowed upon himself personally, for those God had bestowed upon other men, and for the prerogatives with which the most holy Virgin had been favored. Let us consider now the acts which that sentiment inspired.

Joseph, in his gratitude, celebrates the goodness and greatness of God; excites himself to love him more and more, and to consecrate himself without reserve to his service. In imitation of all the just of the old law, and especially of Moses and David, he extols the magnificence of the Most High, and invites all creatures to unite in praising him, and rendering him the just homage which his benefits deserve.

But, more favored than them, he addresses himself to Mary, the most perfect of creatures; even more than this, he addresses Jesus himself, and asks them to join him in hymns of thanksgiving. What a picture is that of the Holy Family singing a hymn of gratitude, repeating the words in which the Royal Prophet invites heaven, earth, and sea to bless the Lord! What a prayer of thanksgiving is that of Joseph when, taking in his arms the Infant God, and raising him towards heaven, he says: "I offer you, O eternal Father, in the name of all creatures, the true Victim of thanksgiving. May you be thanked for all your blessings, and be pleased, in the name of Him through whom I return you thanks, to continue them to earth."

APPLICATION.

Let us be attentive to the blessings of God, on which, perhaps, we do not think sufficiently. Let us open the eyes of our soul to the providential cares of which we are the object at every instant. We feel so clearly what we want, how is it we take so little notice of what we enjoy?

Let us consider that Jesus Christ is the God of thanksgiving. Let us, then, through him, thank his heavenly Father for the favors heaped upon us. Let us thank him especially for our vocation, and the other favors that have been its consequence. But, leaving ourselves, let us thank him for the cares bestowed on our families, our Institute, and the Church. Let us thank him for the prerogatives with which he honored Mary, our good Mother; let us thank him for those with which he honored St. Joseph, our beloved patron and protector; let us thank him for ourselves; let us thank him for those who do not offer thanks; let us thank him in all circumstances, but, above all, when we have the happiness to approach the holy altar, and receive the God of thanksgiving in our hearts.

In fine, let us thank St. Joseph for his protection towards us and our Institute, and still more for his care of Jesus and Mary. Yes, let us feel towards him a great gratitude. But let us not forget that the true mark of that virtue is self-sacrifice. Let us imitate that of St. Joseph, and consecrate ourselves without reserve to the service of God, who has heaped upon us so many favors, and who destines for us still greater in that abode where the elect sing with the angels the hymn of eternal gratitude.

PRAYER.

Who will give me to thank, if not as much as he deserves, at least as much as I can, the God of goodness, from whom I have received so many favors? It will be you, O St. Joseph, who, like Mary, are a perfect model of gratitude. Help me, I beseech you, to know the favors of God; to thank him for them; to prove by my devotedness that his favors are not lavished on a thankless or indifferent soul. Grant, O Joseph, that I may be admitted, at the hour of my death, to celebrate with you the mercies of God in the mansion of his glory.

RÉSUMÉ.

What ought to be our gratitude, we religious, who are overwhelmed with the favors of Heaven? Let us act so that that virtue may exist in us as in St. Joseph.

Joseph was grateful: 1st, because he had a noble and upright soul; 2d, because his heart was so like to that of Mary, always so grateful towards God;....3d, because he formed himself to the resemblance of Jesus Christ, who unceasingly returned thanks to his Father.....

Joseph was grateful for the blessings of Providence in the natural order....and for the gifts of grace with which he was favored....He was grateful for the blessings of God upon others....and in a particular manner for the prerogatives of Mary.....

Joseph, in his gratitude, returns God thanks in hymns and prayers, and thanks him in union with Jesus and Mary.....

Oh how agreeable to God was his prayer of thanksgiving!....

FRUITS.—Not to pass a single day without thanking God for the grace of our vocation; at Mass, let us unite ourselves with Jesus, considered as the Victim of thanksgiving.

THIRTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

PERSEVERANCE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life."
—Apoc. ii. 10.

CONSIDERATION.

It is not enough to have begun well, nor even to have been faithful for some time; we must keep ourselves and advance in the path of virtue; we must persevere and persevere until the end. St. Joseph gives us an example of this.

Let us hear on this subject the amiable St. Francis of Sales, who was so devout to St. Joseph, and who considered him in a particular manner in relation to his perseverance in virtue. "Perseverance," says he, "has reference to a certain interior weariness which comes over us in the length of our sufferings, and which is as formidable an enemy as we can encounter. That virtue makes a man despise his enemy in such a way as to come forth conqueror through unvarying equanimity and submission to the will of God."

Oh how much this weariness we refer to must have weighed upon St. Joseph during his sojourn in Egypt! The angel had not told him the time he was to remain there, so that, not knowing when he would be ordered to return, he could not establish a settled home there.

Moreover, what must have been his desire to return to Israel, through the constant fear in which he lived among the Egyptians! Weariness must, no doubt, have greatly afflicted and tormented his loving heart. Nevertheless, that holy patriarch remains constantly the same—always mild, tranquil, and constant in his submission to the good pleasure of God, to whose guidance he completely abandoned himself.

"God wills that Joseph should be poor. He submits to it, not for a time only, but for his whole life. He most humbly resigns himself to continue in his poverty and lowliness, without allowing himself to be conquered by interior weariness, which, no doubt, made many attacks on him. He remained always constant in his submission, which, like all his other virtues, was always increasing and becoming perfect."

Thus, however little we reflect on the traits that characterize St. Joseph, we easily discover, as the holy Bishop of Geneva shows, that not only did he begin the good that God required of him, but that he continued and completed it without ever giving way to discouragement. That he was not, as we, alas! too frequently are, a reed to be shaken by the wind of inconstancy, but like that tree of which the Royal Prophet speaks, that is planted by the running waters, and which acquires from day to day more firmness and strength.

St. Joseph had an upright spirit, an enlightened intellect. He understood that God and our relations with him do not change, and that there can be no lawful motives for ceasing to serve so good a Master; that man should always be virtuous, and apply himself to

become such more and more, because he has always to glorify God, to save his soul, to acquire merits, and to procure the salvation of his neighbor as much as in his power. Joseph had said, when consecrating himself to the Lord, "You are, O my God, my portion forever;" how, then, could he have thought of serving him only for a certain period of this life, which is at best so short and uncertain?

St. Joseph was the most faithful and the most prudent of the servants of God; he must, then, have had perseverance. No servant, however devoted he may have been, deserves praise until he has reached the end; no one is faithful until he has persevered in his fidelity. Joseph, to whom the Church gives the title of *faithful servant*, never ceased, therefore, to be wholly devoted to God. Moreover, as he was prudent, he took care not to abandon the good he had begun, and thus lose the merits of his past life which he had sanctified by so many acts of virtue.

St. Joseph was just, and, as such, rendered worthy homage to God. But worthy homage to an immutable God should evidently be durable and permanent. St. Joseph was also just in this sense, says St. Francis of Sales, that his will was perfectly united to that of God in all circumstances, prosperous or adverse. But the will of God not changing, he could not be united to him and consequently deserve the title of Just, but by perseverance.

St. Joseph was perfectly grateful for the favors of God, and made out of them the motive for devoting himself to the service of the Lord. But these favors unceasingly increasing in number, his devotedness, far

from diminishing, became from day to day more perfect; and thus his gratitude, like his justness, proves his perseverance.

St. Joseph participated in the interior dispositions of Jesus and Mary. Ah! how could he come short, when he saw the Incarnate Word persevere in humility, penance, and labor, and not wishing to deviate from the career of abjection, poverty, and sufferings he had chosen? Was he not incited also by Mary's example, who, like the morning sun, not only did not go backward, but threw out more and more rays of sanctity, and shone more brightly with the splendor of God.

No, no, it could not be that Joseph should prove inconstant in virtue. He was too well persuaded that discouragement is a deplorable weakness—a concession of the spirit to the flesh—a most sensible outrage to the heart of God, because it implies a want of confidence in his assistance—a consent to a most dangerous temptation—an abandonment of spiritual riches already acquired. Besides, St. Joseph was not ignorant how unhappy inconstant persons are, who are always hesitating, do little or no good, and suffer the anguish of a constant state of doubt. They commence everything without finishing anything, and arrive at the end of their lives without having yet seriously undertaken the work of their sanctification. How, with such convictions, could he have suffered himself to be disheartened? It is most true, then, that he is a model of perseverance.

Let us give glory to St. Joseph for his perseverance, and thank God for having given him the grace of it. Let us think how that good Master offers us also that

inappreciable grace, and that nothing is of more importance to us than to make ourselves faithful to it.

Let us never yield to temptations of discouragement. Let us combat them by prayer, by the renewal of our baptismal vows, and, as far as is permitted us, by that of our vows of religion. Let us combat them, above all, by fervent communions, for it is principally the divine Eucharist which makes the strength of our souls, and gives us constancy in virtue.

Let us ask, through the intercession of St. Joseph, grace to continue and complete the good we have begun, so as to obtain final perseverance—that is to say, the grace which alone puts in our hands our titles to a heavenly inheritance, according to these words of Jesus Christ: *He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.**

PRAYER.

I entreat you, O glorious St. Joseph, to obtain for me, by your intercession, constancy in virtue, by which alone I can please God and obtain the heavenly crown. Help me, O my Father, so that, never allowing myself to give way to discouragement, I may keep myself and advance unceasingly in the path of virtue, and thus obtain the grace of final perseverance.

RÉSUMÉ.

God gives us in St. Joseph an admirable model of perseverance.... That holy patriarch experiences much weariness and suffering, but he never loses heart. He remains always true to himself, tranquil and submissive to the good pleasure of God....

* St. Matt. xxiv. 13.

He understood well that, as God is unchangeable, it is our duty always to serve him....A faithful and prudent servant, he persevered in his fidelity, and he was careful not to renounce, through want of courage, the spiritual riches he had acquired....

A just man, he paid to the unchangeable God a permanent homage....Possessed of a grateful heart, he did not cease to prove his devotion to God, since he never ceased to receive fresh benefits....

Moreover, he was a witness of the perseverance of Jesus and Mary in their career of labor, humiliation, and suffering. Could he not imitate them?....

Let us ask ourselves if we have the same motives for perseverance, and if they make us truly constant in virtue.

Let us reflect, besides, on what we do, to obtain the grace of final perseverance.

FRUITS.—To thank God for the grace of our vocation; to ask him, through St. Joseph, that we may be always faithful to it; never to yield to weariness, to combat it by labor, prayer, and, above all, fervent communions.

THIRTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

THE HEART OF ST. JOSEPH.

"My heart is ready, O my God, my heart is ready."—Ps. cvii. 2.

CONSIDERATION.

When God wishes to raise any one to a high dignity, to entrust to him a great mission, he munificently endows him with all the graces he requires to acquit himself well in it. Thus it was he acted with St. Joseph, whom he destined to be the spouse of the most holy Virgin, and the nursing-father of the Child-God.

Therefore, the heart of that holy patriarch was endowed from his earliest years with the most excellent qualities, which, through his fidelity to grace and the salutary influence of Jesus and Mary, constantly increased, and at last attained to the highest degree of perfection.

*God is love,** says the Holy Scripture. Now, he communicated himself, as it were, without reserve to him whom he had chosen to be his representative with his beloved Son. Joseph must, therefore, have been all love—must have had a heart conformable to that of God—being, as it were, the source of the most active and pure flames of charity. In consequence of this gift of God, his heart, so loving, must have been also full of respect, piety, goodness, gratitude, and adorned with the purest and noblest sentiments.

* St. John iv. 8.

The heart of Joseph did not leave the gifts of God unproductive within it, but made them bring forth fruit more and more by his fidelity to grace. It produced affections each day increasing in fervor and holiness, until God judged it worthy to be placed in immediate relation with the heart of Mary, under whose influence he advanced still more in perfection, and was thus to be participator of all her riches.

Oh who can understand the holy impressions that he receives from her? Who can conceive how the sentiments of that heart, so well disposed, are transformed by the effect of its union with that of the most holy Virgin, whom the Church calls the mother of fair love, or of holy love, and to whom Joseph made it his whole study to acquire a resemblance?

Yet the heart of that great saint becomes still more perfect by the influence of the heart of Jesus. If the intercourse of a few moments with that loving Saviour could change so completely the heart of Zacheus, or of Mary Magdalene, what must have been the power of that influence upon Joseph, who, for thirty years, had the most intimate relations with him, and who was so inclined to love and gratitude?

That holy patriarch saw Jesus at his birth, and he saw that it was through love that the Word of God assumed our nature—that we must seek in his divine heart for the chief motive for his coming into this world, and then he felt himself on fire with the most active and constant flames of love and gratitude.

He contemplated for so many years the adorable Saviour living, working, and journeying with him! He heard his divine words; he admired his sublime exam-

ple, his sufferings, his fatigues, his humiliations! He saw him praying and entreating the heavenly Father to have pity on the children of men and save them, and offering himself as a victim of expiation for the sins of the whole human race!

Ah! if hard hearts like ours are sometimes penetrated with emotions at the mysteries of the divine Infancy, what must not that of St. Joseph have experienced in the prolonged contemplation of those miracles of love, by which God wished to descend to our littleness, the better to make us comprehend our weakness; to be laid in a crib, to bewail with tears over our misfortunes, to undergo all our miseries, to expiate in his immaculate flesh the sins of our guilty flesh! What sentiments penetrated the soul of the nursing-father of Jesus, when, holding him in his arms and pressing him to his breast, he felt the breathings of the most holy heart of that adorable Child!

No, it could not be but that, under the influence of grace and the influence of the hearts of Jesus and Mary, the heart of Joseph should be enlarged, and develope in perfection the qualities with which he was endowed.

Delivered from every disorderly or even purely natural affection, Joseph loves God with all his strength, and thus fulfils the first commandment of the law; he loves Jesus Christ, and he loves in him both his God and his adopted son. He loves the most holy Virgin Mary, in whom he honors the beloved daughter of God the Father, the great Mother of God the Son, the glorious spouse of the Holy Ghost, and the most perfect of pure creatures. He loves all men, whom he

views in their relation to God. The heart of Joseph was, therefore, a furnace of pure love. Identified, so to say, with the hearts of Jesus and Mary, he loves nothing but for motives based upon God, and at bottom he loves but God alone. Therefore, after Mary's, his heart is the most perfect image of the divine heart of Jesus.

The heart of Joseph was tried by affliction, and knew what it was to suffer. It is, therefore, full of compassion for our miseries—participating in the sentiments of him who being God, yet wished through compassion for us to take upon himself our sufferings.

The heart of Joseph was deeply grateful not only to God, but to man. He testified in all circumstances that he appreciated a kindness, and that he religiously cherished the remembrance of it.

The heart of Joseph was full of patience, courage, and generosity. His devotedness was always eager, filling him with zeal, for God required of him whatever sacrifices it might cost. As to himself, no hesitation arose when a good act was to be done.

His heart possessed the most excellent qualities, and has been extolled by all authors, who have dwelt on this subject. They have called it, in truth, a garden enclosed for the world, open only for Jesus and Mary —a sanctuary wherein the Holy Ghost made it his delight to dwell—a living well-spring of the purest joys—the triumphal car of true charity—an altar whereon burned day and night an ever-increasing fire of divine love.

Let us honor that heart. Besides, does not this seem a consequence of the worship we pay to the

hearts of Jesus and Mary? Where Jesus and Mary are, why should not Joseph be there also, since nothing prohibits it? Does he not form with them that earthly Trinity which is the object of the veneration of all the faithful, and of which can be said, with more truth than of the first Christians, that they *had but one heart and one soul!**

APPLICATION.

Let us often have recourse to the heart of Joseph; it is that of our protector, our friend, our father. We shall there find a refuge in our dangers, a consolation in our sufferings, a source of strength in our weakness, and seasons of discouragement.

Let us study to make our hearts conformable to that of Joseph. Let us raise all our affections to God; let us love nothing but God, and for God. Let us guard our hearts as Joseph guarded his. Let us not suffer creatures to turn aside the affections we ought to reserve for Jesus and Mary.

Happy are those who are in heart like to Joseph! God, to recompense them, will fill them with the greatest joy in that kingdom, where he shows himself such as he is to those who have kept their hearts pure.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, we beseech you, by your love for Jesus and Mary, to obtain for us the grace of loving only Jesus and Mary—like you, O loving father, who had a most perfect resemblance to our divine Saviour and his most holy Mother. Grant, by your interces-

* Acts iv. 32.

sion, that our hearts may be truly the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that never may any other flame be enkindled there than that of divine love.

RÉSUMÉ.

With what qualities was the heart of Joseph endowed in the beginning!....

How they were developed by his correspondence to grace....by the effect of the influence of the heart of Mary, and, above all, by that of Jesus!....

The heart of Joseph participated in all the sentiments of the heart of Mary....it participated in an excellent degree in those of the heart of Jesus.....

What love must have been excited therein when the holy patriarch beheld Jesus a child....when he pressed him to his heart!....

Let us consider that that same heart was full of love and compassion for men....deeply grateful for all favors of which it was the object,....docile,....patient,....generous,....and of an unlimited devotedness.

Let us honor it, then, with a true worship, and so act that ours may possess the qualities we admire in it.....

FRUITS.—To produce, in union with St. Joseph, numberless acts of love for Jesus and Mary; to watch over our hearts, not to allow any other affection than that of divine love to exist there.

THIRTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

OUR DUTIES TOWARDS ST. JOSEPH.

"Thou shalt be over my house."—Genesis xli. 40.

CONSIDERATION.

As Christians, and still more as religious, we ought to honor St. Joseph; to thank him for his protection; to pray to him with fervor and confidence; to strive to reproduce in our conduct, the virtues he practiced with so much perfection.

We ought to honor St. Joseph, because he was honored in an ineffable manner by the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

God the Father chose him to be his substitute with his Word, who was to make himself man to save mankind. He was charged equally to represent him with Mary, his beloved daughter, through whom the Saviour was to be given to the world. God the Son respected him more than ever child respected his father. God the Holy Ghost put him in his place near Mary. He wished him to be the true spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, the guardian of her purity, her companion, her protector, her support. He adorned him for this purpose with all the gifts of grace, and made him, after Mary, the masterpiece of his hands.

It is true, then, that Joseph was honored by the Most Holy Trinity; that he was just, and that, conse-

quently, all creatures should pay him a true worship of honor.

But to these reasons how many others must be added! Thus we glory in being the servants of Mary, and entering into the practices of her devotion; but is not the most essential part the imitation of that good Mother as much as possible? Now, Mary honored St. Joseph. She respected him, she obeyed him, she considered him as placed by God over her. To walk in her footsteps, we also must honor him as much as possible.

We should enter into the spirit of the Church. Now, is not the Church anxious to honor St. Joseph? Do we not see her day after day add some new favors to devotions practiced in his honor, and to propagate it more and more among the people?

We should act in conformity with the spirit of our Institute. Now, our Institute pays, and has always paid from its commencement, a most special honor to St. Joseph.

Everything leads us to the performance of this important duty—that is to say, to honor and venerate St. Joseph. We must, in the second place, have a great gratitude to him for the graces he has obtained for us, and especially for that of our vocation, in which he has had so large a share.

We do not know precisely how much we are indebted to him. It is a secret that will not be revealed to us until the great day; but let us not doubt that he, to whom God entrusted the care of all his house, has bestowed special favors upon us that call for our sincerest thanks.

Let us be grateful for his protection extended to our Institute—our spiritual family, which owes to him,

after Mary, its preservation, its progress, the favors it enjoys, the condition, in which it is, to be able to work so much good among souls. Let us be grateful for his care of Mary, our good and loving mother. Ah! let us remember all that he has done for that loving Virgin-Mother of God, to be whose adopted children we reckon as one of our most glorious titles. Let us, above all, be grateful to him for his care of the Infant Jesus, who ought to be infinitely dearer to us than we are to ourselves, and for whom he sacrificed himself without reserve.

But to these motives for gratitude can we not add others peculiar to ourselves? Do we owe nothing to St. Joseph for favors obtained for our relations and friends? For instance, have we not prayed to him for persons who were dear to us, and whom we saw at the point of death? Has not our heart known afterwards these consoling words, that their souls were pleasing to God on leaving this world, because St. Joseph had obtained for them the grace of a happy death? Oh! let us be well persuaded that we owe our holy patron a deep debt of gratitude.

Let us consider, in the third place, that we ought to invoke him with confidence and fervor.

St. Joseph has care of the great family of the Church. He is always inclined to do us good, for his heart participates in the goodness of the heart of Jesus and the tenderness of the heart of Mary. He has unbounded influence with his adopted son, who refuses nothing to his prayers. We should, then, have recourse to him with the most perfect confidence.

Let us think that God encourages us to do so,

by saying to us those words of Pharaoh to the Egyptians, *Go to Joseph*,* and that experience proves how efficacious are the prayers addressed to him. Let us recall to mind what St. Theresa affirms on this subject: "St. Joseph," says she, "always heard me beyond my prayers and my hopes. I do not remember to have asked him anything—above all, on the day of his feast—which he did not grant me."

We ought, in the fourth place, to follow St. Joseph as far as in our power, for it is principally by imitation of the saints that our devotion to them should be manifested.

Let us hear our holy patron saying to us from on high: *Blessed are they that keep my ways.*† Let us not forget to keep the ways of St. Joseph—that is, to form ourselves to his likeness; to force ourselves to become, like him, very chaste, humble, obedient, interior, resigned to the will of God; patient in trials, and grateful for the graces which God accords us. To shun the world; to despise its pleasures; to combat its maxims; to abhor its pomps and vanities; to lead a penitent and laborious life; to work only for Jesus and Mary. In a word, to believe in justice, and to advance courageously towards perfection, which is the end of our state.

APPLICATION.

Let us enter with zeal into the practice of our four principal duties in regard to St. Joseph.

Let us honor him by congratulating him on his prerogatives and his virtues; by celebrating his feast with fervor and joy; by consecrating to him one month in the year, one day in the week. Let us contribute all

* Gen. xli. 55. † Prov. viii. 32.

in our power to propagate his devotion, which, in our days, spreads in a manner so consoling to our hearts. Let us do all that depends on us to procure him faithful disciples. Let us love to speak of him to all persons with whom we come in contact. Let us show by our conduct how much we have at heart that our father should be known, loved, and honored. Let us testify to him by our acts that our souls are penetrated with true gratitude for the graces for which we are indebted to him.

Let us have recourse with fervor and confidence to his protection. Let us pray to him that he may sustain us in our trials, succor us in danger, and lead us to the harbor of safety. Let us pray to him for all those who are dear to us. Let us pray to him, in particular, for our Institute—for that family of which he is the head, and which places all its confidence in him. In fine, let us take the firm resolution of walking in his footsteps, imitating his piety and his devotedness, and reproducing his virtues in ourselves as far as we can with the help of grace.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, blessed adopted father of Jesus, holy spouse of the Virgin of virgins, I consecrate myself today to your service; I propose to honor you as much as will be in my power. Obtain for me fidelity to the engagement I now take. Grant that I may honor you, above all, by the imitation of your virtues, by which I shall be sure of pleasing God and obtaining from his goodness the inestimable grace of final perseverance.

RÉSUMÉ.

We ought to honor St. Joseph, to be grateful to him, to pray to him and imitate him.

Let us honor St. Joseph, for he was honored by the three persons of the adorable Trinity....

Let us honor him, for he was honored by Mary....also by Jesus himself....He is honored by the Church....and in a special manner by our Institute....How many motives have we, then, to honor him as much as possible?....

Let us have true gratitude for his favors to us, our relations, and our Institute....for his care of Mary....and of Jesus our beloved Saviour....

Let us invoke him with confidence....let us pray to him with fervor for ourselves....our brethren....the Church.

Let us ask his assistance....especially for the hour of our death....

Above all, let us imitate him; it is thus we shall show a true devotion towards him.

FRUITS.—To do all that depends on us to propagate the worship of St. Joseph; frequently to ask, through his intercession, the grace of final perseverance.

THIRTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF THOSE WHO ARE CONSECRATED TO GOD.

"Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ."—1 Cor. iv. 16.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us transport ourselves in spirit into the house of Nazareth, the true model of every Christian house, and, above all, of every religious house. Let us admire with the angels of God the ravishing picture that the three august persons who dwell there present us. What order! what union! what piety! what zeal for the glory of God!....But not to leave the ordinary subject of our meditations, let us dwell especially on St. Joseph, and consider him to-day as the patron of those who are consecrated to God.

The Church authorizes us to give him that title, since she says of him that he was placed over the house of the Lord, and considers religious orders as the most excellent part of that house.

The masters of the spiritual life, and among others St. Theresa, St. Francis of Sales, and the Venerable de la Salle, represent St. Joseph to us as the perfect model and special protector of religious. Acting on this view, a great number of congregations have placed themselves under his patronage; pay him a special worship of honor; meditate with great attention on his life and

virtues to form themselves to his likeness. They invoke him for all that relates to the preservation and progress of their society; erect their oratories under his name; place his statue in their houses by the side of that of Mary; entrust to him their dearest interests, and commence their establishments under his auspices.

Everything, then, authorizes us to consider St. Joseph as the patron of religious. Moreover, that evidently results from the analogy between his life and ours.

We are religious—that is to say, favored by the grace of a holy vocation; we have by corresponding to it abandoned the world, embraced the practice of the most exalted virtues, contracted the obligation of tending without ceasing to perfection by the means made use of in our holy state. But is not St. Joseph a perfect model to us in these respects? Was he not favored with the grace of a sublime vocation to which he faithfully corresponded? Did he not, moreover, excel in the practice of all religious virtues, and tend without ceasing to the highest perfection?

From his childhood, Joseph listened with docility to the voice of grace, and hastened to follow the interior attraction of grace. This led him to shun the intercourse of the world; to separate himself from it at least in spirit and heart to lead a life of prayer, retirement, and penance, and to fix himself in those dispositions by the vow of perpetual virginity. He was, therefore, faithful to his vocation. But let us consider him, above all, in the exercise of the virtues of our holy state, and recall to mind his spirit of faith, his obedience, his poverty, his chastity, his piety, his devotedness, his pro-

gress in sanctity, his union with Jesus, and his conformity of soul with Mary.

Joseph looks at everything with the eyes of faith, and from a supernatural point of view. He does nothing through human motives or from habit. Each of his actions has its source in the Holy Ghost, by whose inspiration he acts. The end he proposes to himself is always the greatest good, and especially the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he excelled in the spirit of faith, which ought to be the very foundation of souls consecrated to God.

Joseph practiced in its perfection the virtue of obedience, which is the essence of a religious life; he obeyed always, and in everything; he sacrificed to obedience what he held most dear. He obeyed without delay, without offering pretexts, without complaining, showing that his will was absolutely conformable to that of God.

Joseph was poor, in that poverty which Jesus Christ praises by these words: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.** Ah! how many times was he subjected to the severest privations, and even wanted the necessaries of life! But in his poverty he always maintained perfect resignation, and absolute detachment from creatures. His heart did not covet the goods of earth, for it awakened in his soul no other ambition than that of possessing the riches of grace.

Joseph was chaste to a degree so perfect, that God judged him worthy to be the spouse of the Immaculate Virgin; so chaste that he who is the Sun of justice, the

* St. Matt. v. 3.

splendor of his glory, and whose delight is to be among the lilies, wished to remain thirty years in his company, and to give him every mark of honor, respect, and love. Yes, Joseph loved chastity, and always had a sovereign horror of what is capable of tarnishing it. On that account, he kept his eyes closed, to open them only to the contemplation of Jesus. His imagination recalled to him nothing but holy things; he did not allow it to present anything but the features of Jesus, and the beauty of the new Jerusalem. What a model of purity he offers us in his person, while at the same time he points out to us the precautions we should adopt to guard that holy virtue!

Joseph excelled no less in piety and devotedness. What was his life but a continual prayer, a constant union with God, an uninterrupted meditation on the mysteries of the divine Childhood, and the great work of the redemption of the world? What did he do here below but adore God, while at the same time he employed all his faculties in his service? Let us remember that it was not for himself that he lived, but solely for Jesus and Mary—that he reserved for them all that he could give, and that his whole life may be called a continual sacrifice.

In fine, let us consider that St. Joseph is our model in our progress towards perfection. Faithful to each grace, and consequently always meriting new ones, he advanced more and more in the path of justice. He beheld Mary increasing in merits, as the sun increases in splendor from its rising to its noonday brightness, and he strove to imitate her. He beheld the Child Jesus "increasing in age and wisdom before God and

men," and, in imitation of him, he made it his endeavor to increase each day in virtue, so that his holy death was the last finish to a picture perfectly resembling the life and death of Jesus, our admirable model.

APPLICATION.

Let us esteem it a great advantage to have in St. Joseph so good, so powerful a patron, and whose life presents such an analogy to ours. It is, in fact, an assurance given us that he feels a special interest in us, and that he makes it his business to plead for us at the throne of God.

But let us not forget that to honor him as our patron, we must, before all and above all, apply ourselves to imitate his virtues, for a patron is at once both a protector and a model. It is for us to make St. Joseph our model; on that condition he will become our protector. Let us imitate his obedience, his chastity, his detachment from creatures, and his piety. Then we may be certain of experiencing the effects of his intercession.

Let us draw our virtue from the same sources—that is to say, from the spirit of faith and union with Jesus and Mary. Let us not stop in the path of virtue, but sanctify ourselves still more each day, so that, when the hour that is to close our time of trial has come, Joseph may see our souls like to his, and, acting then as our protector, may lead them to the throne of God, and obtain that they may participate in the peace of the elect by the sentence of mercy passed on them.

PRAYER.

O blessed Joseph, who art the model and protector of religious, obtain for us the grace of imitating you in the practice of the virtues of our holy state; for it is by that means we can make ourselves agreeable to God, do all the good he expects of us, and merit the crown he destines for those who, like you, shall have devoted themselves without reserve to his glory.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider St. Joseph as the patron of persons consecrated to God. The Church authorizes us to give him that title, by telling us that God has placed him over his whole house.....The masters of a spiritual life present him to us as such, and among them we may mention St. Theresa, St. Francis of Sales, and the Venerable de la Salle....

A great number of congregations honor him as their special patron....

Besides, his life has a great analogy with that of religious!

Joseph had a sublime vocation, to which he faithfully corresponded.

Joseph practiced in an excellent degree all the virtues that ought to characterize religious—the spirit of faith, ...obedience,....poverty,....chastity,....piety,....devotedness,....constant progress towards perfection.....

God in giving him these characteristics wished us to see in his faithful servant our model and protector, and that we should honor him in our communities as much as we possibly can.

FRUITS.—To have a great confidence in St. Joseph, our glorious patron; to meditate often on his virtues, and to strive to reproduce them in a most perfect manner.

THIRTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

PROGRESS OF ST. JOSEPH IN PERFECTION.

"Joseph is a growing son."—Genesis xlix. 22.

CONSIDERATION.

Jacob feeling his end draw near wished to bless his children before leaving. When he came to Joseph, he foretold that he would go on always increasing, and that his virtue would become more and more perfect.... These words of the aged patriarch, while proclaiming the merits of his beloved son, were at the same time a prophecy regarding the new Joseph, the admirable nursing-father of our Saviour! For he kept always increasing in virtue. His soul was always growing more beautiful in the eyes of God.

The name of Joseph signifies *increase*. Now, who was ever more worthy to bear so glorious a name?

St. Joseph received the greatest graces at the beginning of his ministry, which was to be superior to that of the prophets and apostles. We cannot doubt, says St. Liguori, that God enriched him with all the graces and privileges accorded to other saints. The three divine persons dispensed their treasures of blessings upon him according to the relations he was to have with each of them and with Mary.

God the Father blessed him at his entrance into life,

so as to make him his worthy representative with the Word made man. God the Son blessed him so as to make him his worthy foster-father. God the Holy Ghost blessed him so as to make him the worthy spouse of the most holy Virgin-Mother of God. Joseph, then, received in the beginning the greatest graces, inclining his heart to charity, humility, chastity, devotedness, sweetness, and all the virtues that were suitable to his great mission.

But if Joseph received so many graces in the beginning, he corresponded to each of them with the greatest fidelity. A prudent servant, he, by his good will, turned to account the talents entrusted to him. The inclination urging him to virtue did not find a soul lukewarm and indifferent, but a generous heart, borne with ardor towards virtue, thinking only on doing what God commanded, and doing it in the most perfect way possible. Therefore, his thoughts were always great, noble, elevated, and his heart always attached by the bonds of a most tender love. His occupations, his labor, his life tended only to the greater glory of God. His most constant and most sincere desire was to please him by doing his holy will.

Now, if St. Joseph was such, what must have been his progress towards perfection! It is a principle, that grace increases through our fidelity; that every act of correspondence on our part makes the communications of the Holy Ghost more abundant in us, and our hearts more disposed to follow His inspirations. What, then, must have been the development of grace in St. Joseph, who was always so faithful to it!

Joseph increased in virtue from his tender years, and

his progress was such that when arrived at the age of manhood he was worthy to become the spouse of Mary. He had then a true conformity of heart with that holy Virgin, who from the time of her immaculate conception was more pleasing to God than all the angels and saints together, and who, moreover, increased unceasingly in grace and merit.

But with how much more reason did Joseph increase in virtue when he became the spouse of Mary! Who can conceive how the example and words of the most holy Mother of God influenced his heart, already so inclined to virtue; and, on the other hand, what graces that well-beloved daughter of the heavenly Father, whose power of intercession was always unlimited, obtained for her holy spouse!

Therefore, Joseph must have unceasingly advanced towards perfection. Moreover, was he not borne towards it by the influence which his most holy spouse naturally exercised over him? "See," says St. Bernardine of Sienna on this subject, "what the society of great saints produces. Experience has shown that we cannot live long in their company without receiving from them and with them wonderful enlightenment, great impulses of love, sweet interior consolations. What must have been the effect upon the soul of Joseph of the society of the most holy Virgin, with whom he lived so many years! He could not but have been borne more and more towards virtue all the time that he lived with her, and advance with rapid strides to the highest state of perfection."

Yet it was not in Mary, but in Jesus that St. Joseph found the most powerful stimulants for tending to per-

fection. Could he have any other ambition than to make himself like to that divine Master, and follow his precepts? Did he not see him increasing in age and wisdom before God and men, and thus teaching us that we should always advance in virtue? Did not the intercourse which he had with the adorable Child lead him, as it were, naturally to increase more and more in charity, chastity, and holiness?

"Divine love," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "must have been enkindled more and more in St. Joseph in the company of the God made man. Was he not, in truth, in immediate contact with Him who inspires the seraphim? If the two disciples from Emmaüs felt their hearts on fire from conversing for a short time with Jesus Christ, what must the heart of St. Joseph have experienced, living with him in such familiar relations for thirty years?"

And that which took place as regards charity must have been equally true as to chastity and the other virtues. "O Joseph," exclaims Father Bouix, on this subject, "the Incarnate Word that reposed so often on your heart, gave to the lily of your virginity an ever-increasing whiteness. He transfigured your virginity, elevating it unceasingly so as to make it approach still nearer to his divine heart. That divine Sun was reflected in your soul as in a clear stream. Spiritual riches did not cease to accumulate in you during the seventy years of your life. You grew up like a cedar of sanctity. From height to height, you attained to that elevation compared to which every angel and man are placed beneath you. The increase of grace is such in your soul that my spirit is unequal to the contempla-

tion of it. For thirty years you were occupied only about Jesus and Mary, and for thirty years Jesus and Mary did not cease to be engaged about you, to enrich and sanctify you. O Joseph, I pause here, because I am lost in the immensity of your treasures of grace."

APPLICATION.

Let us not forget that we are obliged by our state to tend unceasingly towards perfection; that to ignore this would make us very culpable before God. Let us watch, then, over ourselves to discharge that duty well. Let us, in imitation of Joseph, act in such a manner that each day may see us more virtuous than the preceding one. Let us hasten the more vigorously in this path, as the time of our career here must soon end. The more graces we receive from God, the more should we strive to make them bear fruit within us.

Oh how happy we shall be at the end of our days, if we have, in this way, made progress towards virtue! We shall terminate it with joy, because we shall have a well-founded confidence that God will give us the crown promised to those who will persevere in justice.

PRAYER.

I beseech you, O Joseph, my loving father, to teach me what is the value of grace, and to obtain for me that I may be faithful to it. Teach me what I ought to do to increase every day this treasure in my soul; to advance from virtue to virtue till I attain to that degree of perfection to which God calls me, so that I may be worthy to enjoy with you in heaven the degree of glory which is there destined for me.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph received in the beginning the greatest graces; he corresponded to each of them with an entire fidelity. Therefore, he went on increasing in virtue and merits....

How virtuous he was in his youth, since he became worthy to be chosen the spouse of Mary!....

What progress in sanctity did he not make afterwards, when he was influenced by the example and words of the most holy Virgin!....

How much more did he increase when he was in familiar intercourse with the Child Jesus!....

Oh how he must have, then, increased in charity....in purity....in piety!....What beauty his soul acquired from day to day!....

In what a degree of sanctity was it when it quitted this earth, since it had constantly advanced towards perfection with an ever-increasing swiftness!....

Let us often call to mind this example, we religious especially, who are obliged by our state to tend unceasingly to perfection....

FRUITS.—To make with exactitude the weekly review and the monthly retreat, to be able to give ourselves a good account of our progress in spiritual life; to ask, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the grace to fulfil faithfully all the obligations of our holy state.

THIRTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF PERSONS DEVOTED TO THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

"I take the boy upon me, require him at my hand."—Genesis xliii. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

St. Joseph, our patron as religious, is such also in so far as we are religious teachers. To prove this, we need only reflect on the mission he fulfilled, and consider it in its source, its object, its end, and the virtues it required him to practice.

It was from God the Father that Joseph received the important and sublime mission of watching over the Child Jesus, of being his guardian, his guide, his protector. It was he who named him his representative with that adorable Saviour, and who, in the strictest sense, used to him these words: "*Take this Child.** All you will do for him you will do for me, because my Son and I are one in the unity of nature." But does not our mission as Christian teachers proceed equally from God? Has he not established us his representatives in regard to our pupils, and is it not in his name that we speak to them?

Yes, it is God who, by his providence, called us to our holy state, and said to us: "Take this Child; give

* Exodus ii. 9.

him instruction and good example; nourish his soul with the bread of truth. What you will do for him I will consider as done for myself, for I see in him my beloved Son, whose loving member he is."

Our mission, considered in its beginning, has the same source as that of St. Joseph. It is evidently divine, and among the designs of the mercy of God towards men.

Let us consider, in the second place, the mission of St. Joseph in its object.

Joseph takes care of the Child Jesus; it is over him that he watches; it is he that he protects; it is for him that he devotes himself; it is in him that all his labors terminate. But let us call to mind that Christians make one with Jesus Christ. That the Child Jesus is in each of our pupils who are in a state of grace; that, we have, in one sense, the same object for our solicitude that St. Joseph had. It is on Jesus, considered in the person of the children confided to us, that we lavish our cares; it is Jesus whom we protect in them; it is to Jesus that we devote ourselves in devoting ourselves to our work; it is in Jesus that all our labors in their regard end; it is Jesus whom we love in their persons.

Let us consider, in the third place, the mission of St. Joseph in its motives and its end.

Joseph takes care of the Child Jesus, through obedience to God the Father, who had confided that mission to him. He takes care of him through love for Jesus, in whom he adores his Lord and his God, and through his desire of imitating Mary, whom he sees entirely devoted to that divine Child. He takes care

of Jesus until he attains his complete development—his perfect age, as St. Paul* says.

But under all these respects, our mission presents striking traits of resemblance to that of Joseph; and, in truth, why are we devoted to our work? Is it not through obedience to God, the Author of our vocation? Why do we devote ourselves to it, but for love of Jesus, our Lord and our God, who wishes to be the object of our solicitude in the person of our pupils? Is it not also to please Mary, whose children they are, and who cannot but feel the most lively affection for those who consecrate themselves to the salvation of their souls?

What is our object? Is it not to form Jesus in their hearts, to make Christ at his perfect age come into their souls? Yes, Christian education is nothing else than the formation of Jesus Christ in the person of the children. Its end is to bring each of them to be able to say in all truth these words of St. Paul: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.*† It is to reproduce Jesus Christ in their souls, so that, having a true resemblance to that divine Saviour, and an intimate union with him, God the Father may be able to look on them with love, and say of them: "Yes, these are my beloved children, of whom I am well pleased."

It is true, then, that our mission is like to that of Joseph in its motives and its end; that, consequently, our work is his work, in which he cannot but feel the greatest interest.

No, let us not doubt but he feels an interest in the work of the Christian education of children. Do they

* Eph. iv. 13. † Gal. ii. 20.

not remind him of the Child Jesus? Are they not in the Church, which is the mystical body of Jesus Christ —the dearest portion, and the one most worthy of solicitude? Head of the great Christian family, the faithful servant to whom was entrusted the care of all in the house of his Lord, he cannot but hold such a work as the object of his tenderest affections.

But let us not merely see these different traits of resemblance between our mission and that of St. Joseph. Let us consider, also, under the head of Application, that he requires of us the exercise of the same virtues that he practiced.

APPLICATION.

Let us remember that Joseph was full of respect for the Child confided to his care; that he saw in him God himself. Ah! like him, let us respect the children who are confided to us; let us not look at them but from the point of view of faith; let us not consider them but in their relations to Jesus Christ, whose members, co-heirs, and brothers they are, and who wishes that we should respect himself in their persons.

Let us remember that St. Joseph devoted himself without reserve to the work which Providence entrusted to him; that he made a complete abnegation of all personal interest, and testified, in all circumstances, that he was truly a man of sacrifice. Let us do the same. Besides, it is necessary. Our work cannot succeed but on that condition. Is it not by self-sacrifice that self-sacrifice is taught? To train up Christians, we must train up men of self denial. Now, no one can succeed in that who is not such himself.

Let us remember that St. Joseph was a man of exact vigilance; that he faithfully guarded the deposit entrusted to his care. The greatest subject of sorrow during his whole life was that he had left the Child Jesus at Jerusalem without ascertaining for certain that he was with Mary, or other persons of his acquaintance—a great lesson for us who are charged with the education of children. Let us watch over them; that is a point of sovereign importance. The greatest dangers menace their souls, and it lies with us to cause them to avoid them.

Let us call to mind, again, that St. Joseph was a man of exemplary piety, consummate prudence, and indefatigable zeal. We have to imitate him in these three virtues. Our pupils will not be formed to piety unless they observe it in us in an eminent degree. Their weakness and the perils they run into, require us to be very prudent in all our intercourse with them, and to be animated with true zeal for the salvation of their souls.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, to whom God the Father entrusted his adorable Son, remember that to us also he has entrusted that adorable Son in the person of our pupils; obtain for us that we may watch over them as you watched over him. Deign, for that end, to ask of your adorable Saviour for us the grace to imitate your virtues, so that, obtaining His glory and the salvation of souls during life, we may merit to experience on the day that it ends the effects of his mercy.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph is our patron as Christian teachers.

It is from God he received his mission to protect the Child Jesus. It is from God, likewise, the Author of our vocation, that we received the mission confided to us....

St. Joseph was the representative of God the Father in regard to the Child Jesus. We, too, are such, in the strictest sense, in regard to our pupils....

It is of Jesus that Joseph takes care....It is also Jesus, considered in the person of the children, who is the object of our solicitude....

Joseph devotes himself, through motives of faith, to the mission confided to him by Providence. From the same motives we should acquit ourselves in our duties....

Joseph was assisted by Mary in the care he took of the Child-God; but is it not by the protection of that good Mother that the Christian teacher forms Jesus Christ in the person of his pupils?....

St. Joseph is greatly interested in the education of children, because they are the dearest portion of the Church, which is the mystical body of Jesus Christ; because they are the most deserving of interest amongst all the members of the great Christian family over which he is placed....

Joseph is a model for the Christian teacher, by the virtues of which he gives an example, and especially by his respect for the Child entrusted to him....by his devotedness....by his watchfulness....by his piety....by his prudence....by his indefatigable zeal....

FRUITS.—To look often and with faith on the picture of St. Joseph; to beseech him to help us in the work in which we are engaged.

THIRTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH OUR MODEL AS TEACHERS.

"Make it according to the pattern that was shown thee."
—Exodus, xxv. 40.

CONSIDERATION.

Our Venerable Founder in selecting St. Joseph as the patron of our society wished that we should often look up to that great servant of God as our model as teachers. Let us enter into his views, and meditate to-day on St. Joseph practicing the virtues most necessary for us in our relations with our pupils. These are the spirit of faith, respect, watchfulness, and devotedness.

St. Joseph guiding himself only by the light of faith, and acting according to the revelation given him by the angels, saw God in the person of the Child confided to his care. He adored in him the Messiah promised to the world—the Emmanuel who had espoused all the miseries of our humanity, to restore it to the state of happiness from which it had fallen.

Let us imitate St. Joseph in that first respect. The children confided to us appear to our eyes under two very different aspects—that of nature and that of faith. Let us take care not to look at them from the natural point of view, for either we should not love them, and consequently not devote ourselves to the work of their salvation, or we should love them with a natural love

which would be full of danger to us, and might lead us to the depths of the abyss of evil. Let us not look at them but with the eyes of faith. Let us see in them the members and brothers of Jesus Christ, the temples of the Holy Ghost, the heirs to the glory of heaven. It is then only we should love them with that supernatural love which alone inspires true devotedness.

St. Joseph respects the Child Jesus, and at the very moment when he presses him to his heart, he adores in him the thrice-holy God, before whom the heavenly spirits cover themselves with their wings. Let us draw from that this important instruction, that we ought constantly to respect our pupils, to act towards them as their dignity of man and Christian requires—as being consecrated to God by baptism, as being, in regard to us, Jesus Christ himself. Has not our Lord in truth said these words, which we cannot too often think of: *Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.**

St. Joseph watches over the Child-God. He considers these words of Scriptures, "Take this child, and take care of him for me,"† as said to him by the heavenly Father. Therefore, he is never wanting in his attention, but guards him with the greatest solicitude, so that no misfortune befalls him. Let us imitate his vigilance. To us also is it said, "Take care of these children." We must, therefore, never lose sight of them so long as they are under our responsibility. Let us do all that depends on us—never to be wanting in that respect. Let us think that an enemy much more cruel than Herod wishes the life of their souls, and that,

* St. Matt. xxv. 40. † Exodus ii. 9.

according to the expression of holy Scripture: *The devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.**

St. Joseph, who is our model in the spirit of faith, as well as in respect and watchfulness as regards our pupils, is equally so in the devotedness that ought to characterize religious teachers. He was employed in the education of the Child Jesus from the purest motives, and with admirable generosity, great courage, and heroic constancy.

Joseph did not consult his own interests; he did not propose to himself to please men, but only to do the will of God; in all truth he could say these words of David: "For what do I desire on earth or in heaven, but you, O my God!" Ah! may it be so with us, and may the desire to please God, to promote his glory, to fulfil his holy will, reign in our souls, and be the source of all our actions.

St. Joseph devoted himself without reserve. From the day he knew of his august mission, he made the complete abnegation of self, and said thenceforth by his actions: "To you, and for you, O Jesus, I devote all I have and all I am! To you and for you, I devote my mind, my heart, my life! To you I consecrate my time, my anxieties, my labors! To you I sacrifice all my health, strength, and courage!" What a model for us, who are, like him, consecrated to the service of God!

But is our devotedness entire? It is with sincerity, and without any regard to self, that we say: "I consecrate myself to you, O most august Trinity, to procure your glory as much as will be in my power, and you

* St. Peter v. 8.

will require of me?" Is it not with a certain reserve we say it, and as if afraid of giving too much to God in giving him the little that we are.

St. Joseph devoted himself with generosity and humility. Let us contemplate him in the duties that Providence entrusted to him. There is nothing there for nature which they require should be wholly crucified. He devotes himself to his work, without requiring in return any temporal advantage. He passes his life in painful toils, disowned by men, perhaps even despised by some, yet is happy at the lot that has fallen to him.....Ah! does he not know that he is accomplishing great things; that God has associated him with Jesus to concur in the redemption of the world and the salvation of souls, and that thus the fruits of his sweat would be the sanctification of many in Israel!

Following his example, let us devote ourselves generously to the Christian education of our pupils; let us hope nothing from men; let us even expect from them nothing but ingratitude. Besides, what matter about their sentiments in regard to us, since we know from a certain source that we are doing a great work, that we are associated with Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls!

APPLICATION.

It is principally from the contemplation of Jesus and Mary that St. Joseph draws the strength of soul that inspired him with a spirit of sacrifice. Let us act in the same way. Let us cast our eyes on Jesus and Mary, for whom we sacrifice ourselves. Have we not

in our classes, and even everywhere in our houses, their holy statues? Let us look at them, and then say to ourselves: "The labor to which I devote myself is painful, but it is for Jesus. Ah! how could I find it too fatiguing when it is question of pleasing Him who, being the God of heaven and earth, made himself a little Child for me, suffering and weeping in a crib? The labor to which I devote myself is painful, but it is for Mary; it is to make her known, loved, and thanked; it is that she may live in the hearts of my pupils." No, nothing can dishearten the religious teacher when he reflects that he is devoting his labors for Jesus and Mary. Jesus and Mary are all his love, and love finds nothing above its strength, but wishes, on the contrary, more than it can do.

Let us cast our eyes also on the statue of St. Joseph, and say: "Behold him whom I call my patron and my model; but how he labored and suffered! Should I not bear a resemblance to him?" Then we add: "Courage, my soul; yes, courage! Jesus, for whom Joseph sacrificed himself without reserve, has rewarded him as God. He will act so towards me; and when I shall have used in his service all the strength and life he has given me, he will grant that I may die, like St. Joseph, in his arms, and in those of his most holy Mother."

PRAYER.

Great saint, who art my protector and model, both as a religious and a teacher, obtain for me the grace of imitating your faith and your devotedness; so that, acquitting myself with the greatest fidelity of my ob-

ligations as a Christian teacher, I may merit to share in the recompense of those who, like you, consecrate themselves to his service without reserve, and from the purest motives of faith and religion.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider St. Joseph as the model of Christian teachers....in his spirit of faith....in his respect for the Child Jesus....in his watchfulness and his devotedness....

Let us not look upon our pupils but from the point of view of faith, for otherwise we should not love them, and consequently should not devote ourselves to them....or we should love them with a natural love, which would be full of dangers....Let us look at them only in their relations to the things of eternity....Let us respect our pupils as St. Joseph respected the Child Jesus, for they represent the divine Saviour in regard to us....

Let us watch over them with the greatest solicitude, as St. Joseph watched over Jesus....

Let us show by our devotedness that we are really the imitators of that great saint....

Let us devote ourselves from the pure motive of the glory of God, and in no way from the hope of any temporal advantage....

Let us devote ourselves without reserve, and forever....

Like St. Joseph, let us draw strength for our devotedness from the contemplation of Jesus and Mary....If we really love Jesus and Mary, nothing in our state will appear to us too painful, or will be able to deter us....

FRUITS.—To look often, and always with faith, on the statues of Jesus and Mary; to ask, through St. Joseph, the grace of acquitting ourselves well of our obligations as Christian teachers.

THIRTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF CHILDREN.

"Take this child, and nurse him for me; I will give thee thy wages."
Exodus ii. 9.

CONSIDERATION.

Charged with the difficult and important task of educating pupils and making them true Christians—that is to say, forming them to the practice of the maxims of the holy Gospel—it is necessary that we have great confidence in the success of our undertakings, and that we should be constantly actuated with truly apostolic zeal. For this end, let us look on St. Joseph to-day as the protector of children, and more especially of those who are entrusted to us.

Let us consider what has been and still is our love for children, and how much all that has reference to their salvation should interest us.

No doubt St. Joseph has a singular predilection for children. That sentiment was always in his heart, because it was placed there by God himself, who destined him to be the guardian of his Son, who was to become a little child to save us. Yes, he loved children, he who lived only for the Child Jesus, he to whom every child recalled the memory of the beloved of his heart, who was also the object of his adoration.

St. Joseph loved the Child Jesus with an unlimited

love, and he knew that in him all human nature, and, in particular, youth, was represented. He ought, then, and, as it were, by a necessary consequence, to love all mankind, and especially children.

But if St. Joseph loved children when on earth, how much more does he love them now that he is in heaven! The saints when they enter into their abode of happiness do not lose their sentiments of love for men. They are constantly animated by them, and with a quite different force from what they experienced in their mortal bodies. The heart of St. Joseph is, then, filled with affection for Christian youth, who, besides, have just claims to his love and to that of the saints.

St. Joseph participates in all the sentiments of Jesus; his heart forms but one with that of his adorable Saviour. But in how high a degree love for children exists in the heart of Jesus! Now, as in the days when he was visible among men, does he suffer these words of ineffable sweetness to pass from his divine lips: *Suffer little children to come unto me.** St. Joseph experiences the same love for them, and repeats likewise: "Suffer little children to come unto me, for in coming unto me they will go with safety to Jesus, who alone is salvation and life."

St. Joseph loves Jesus, not only in his divine person, but also in his mystical body, which is the Church. What, then, must be his love for children, who form the most interesting part of it, and are the members of Jesus Christ placed nearest to his adorable heart!

Yes, St. Joseph loves children; he loves them as the saints love—solely with reference to Jesus. He loves

* St. Mark x. 14.

them because they are the brothers of that Infant-God of whom he was the adopted father. He loves them because he sees in them the image of Jesus Christ —in one sense, Jesus himself.

Let us often think of that love of St. Joseph for children; let us think, in particular, of that which he has for our pupils, and, in imitation of him, let us propose to ourselves to love them only with a view to Jesus Christ, who tells us in his Gospel: *Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.** Let us not love them but to lead them to that divine Saviour, and through him to true life.

But let us consider in St. Joseph not merely his love for children, but the assistance he renders them.

St. Joseph is the protector of children; he watches over them from heaven; he feels an interest in all that can contribute to their salvation; he continues to them the solicitude he had for the Child-God, whom they represent; he becomes their intercessor with him, and obtains for them all the graces they require; he provides with a paternal tenderness for the wants of their souls; he protects them against the attacks of hell; he defeats the perfidy of those spirits of darkness of whom Herod was but the blind instrument, and who seek only to make Jesus die in the hearts of men.

Let us judge of the solicitude of St. Joseph for children by the success that has crowned the works with respect to children that were placed under his patronage. Let us judge of it especially by the protection he has granted to our Institute—that great work of one

* St. Matt. xxv. 40.

of his most faithful servants, and principal end of which is the Christian education of children.

APPLICATION.

The thought that St. Joseph is the protector of children, and especially of those entrusted to our charge, ought to inspire in us sentiments of the greatest confidence, and powerfully stimulate our zeal.

St. Joseph is the protector of our pupils. He therefore feels an interest in our work. Moreover, is it not also his own, since it is the formation, the preservation of Jesus in the souls of the children? Ah! let us not doubt that he is disposed to help us in our labors. Let us study to have a true devotion to him, and we may be sure that God will bless our efforts, and make us attain that result which is the end of all our desires—to preserve the life of Jesus in the hearts of our pupils.

St. Joseph is the protector of our children. What a motive we have, then, to watch over ourselves so as to do nothing that can scandalize them. Alas! could he do anything else than abandon to the wrath of Heaven him who, like a new Herod, sought to make the Child Jesus die in their persons!

St. Joseph is the protector of our children. Let us, then, inspire them with great confidence in his intercession. Let us tell them, and in the accents of strongest conviction, that he is all-powerful in heaven; that he counts it a happiness to present their prayers to Jesus Christ, and that, therefore, they will never invoke him with faith without receiving succor from him. Let us train them to a true devotion towards him. Let us teach them to pray to him with piety and confidence.

Let us induce them to recommend the work of their education to him, their success in their studies, their choice of a state of life, all their future, and, above all, their passage from time to eternity.

And let us, too, pray frequently to him for them. Let us recommend to him those whom we see answering the care we bestow on them, so that they may persevere in their good dispositions, and those also who appear to have entered on a bad course, so that he may obtain their return to virtue. Let us beseech him, in the name of the Child Jesus, always to show himself their generous protector. Let us beg him to extend his solicitude to those who are no longer with us, but have gone to follow their career in a world so full of dangers.

Oh what precious advantages we should secure to ourselves, if we entered into those dispositions! With how many graces should we be enriched, and with what confidence should we present ourselves before God at the end of our life, which, in imitation of that of St. Joseph, should have been entirely consecrated to his glory!

PRAYER.

Why have I not, O glorious St. Joseph, the dispositions with which you took care of the Child Jesus! What good I might do, and what glory I might procure for God! Grant them, by your all-powerful protection, that, imitating your virtues, I may succeed in training my pupils to a Christian life, and that, one day, they and I may be introduced to you to offer you our homage for the crowning grace of perseverance.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider St. Joseph as the protector of children in general, and more especially of those confided to us....

He loves them, because he loved children, being created to love the Child-God;....he loves them, because they belong to the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and because, seen from a point of faith, they are, in one sense, the Child Jesus.

He loves them, and he protects them; he continues to them the cares he lavished on the Child Jesus;....he provides for the wants of their souls, defends them against the assaults of the devil, becomes their intercessor with Jesus Christ....Let us love our pupils solely from supernatural motives, with a view to Jesus Christ alone.....

Let us remember that St. Joseph is their protector, and that consequently:

1st. We should have confidence in his assistance; for our work is also his....

2d. We should beseech him to help us, and secure the success of our labors....

3d. We should never allow ourselves to do anything that might scandalize our pupils; for then their powerful protector would turn against us....

4th. Let us inspire them all with a great devotion to him....

5th. Let us pray to him for them; let us recommend to him the good, that they may persevere, and those who are not in grace with God, that he may obtain for them a return to virtue....

Let us address him also for those who have left us, and who run such great dangers in the world....Oh how much good we should do were we filled with sentiments in harmony with this belief, that St. Joseph is the protector of our pupils!....

FRUITS.—To love to speak of St. Joseph to our pupils; to pray to him often for our success in the class-room.

FORTIETH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH THE PATRON OF YOUTH.

"Thou art, O Lord, my hope from my youth."—Ps. lxx. 5.

CONSIDERATION.

God, whose goodness is infinite, receives with favor the tribute of love and adoration of all persons; but he has a special predilection for those who offer it to him from their youth, for those who, at that period of life when the severest trials are met with, secure themselves against the contagion of vice, and keep their robe of innocence unsullied.

It was thus St. Joseph acted; therefore, he is a perfect model for young persons. He did not wait until his youth had gone by to give himself wholly to God. No, no, he hastened to correspond to grace as soon as he had heard its secret voice, and from his childhood he had no desire but that of making himself more and more agreeable in the eyes of God.

Joseph had an upright and enlightened soul. He understood that man ought to give glory to God at all times, since at all times he experiences the effects of his goodness. He reflected on the nature of the good things of eternity and the short duration of human life, and he drew from thence that it would be a folly and a crime to deduct from that a single instant to be given either to creatures or Satan. He knew that God

reserved for himself the first fruits of the earth, and he thought, with reason, that he reserved still more for himself the first fruits of the life of man—that is to say, the period of youth.

Joseph was docile to grace. Now, grace prepared him for his sublime mission, and inclined him from his infancy to all the virtues by which he was to be, one day, worthy of being the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus.

Joseph loved God. When one loves there is no delay in testifying love, but this is done as soon as possible; and, in the order of grace, this can always be done. Joseph, from the dawn of his reason, consecrated himself to God. He gave himself by vow to his service, and, when the world sought to engage his affections, he turned to God and said to him: "This heart belongs to you alone, O my beloved Lord. No other flame than that of your pure love shall ever be enkindled there, for you are all to me, and there is none but you whom I wish to please."

Such are the reasons why Joseph devoted himself to God from his youth. Let us recall them frequently to mind, and think of the virtues that they inspired him to practice.

Yes, we may be certain, as pious authors teach, that there never was a man of more distinguished piety, more sustained application, and more generous heart. He had an upright mind, and an amiable disposition. Those who looked upon him were struck with the dignity of his behavior, the simplicity of his manners, the holiness of his discourse, and admired his incomparable purity, his prudence and modesty.

Joseph entered on the career of perfection from the commencement of his life, and, as he advanced in age, his progress was more rapid, giving to his virtues greater development and solidity.

But that which it is important we should consider, above all, in Joseph, the model of youth, is the practice of chastity. He so excelled in that virtue, that, by his presence alone, he caused it to be desired and loved, while he inspired at the same time a horror of the opposite vice. He knew that in this matter a young man needs the prudence of an old, and on that account he fenced himself round with every sort of precaution. He shunned and despised the world, and closed his eyes against the sight of its seducing pomps. He gave himself the habit of conquering in everything, and of never yielding to a suggestion of Satan. Therefore, his soul was pure as snow, or rather it resembled, while in his mortal body, that of a heavenly being.

St. Joseph is, then, the true model of young persons; he is also, in a no less degree, their guide and their protector.

Joseph, in the exercise of his mission towards Jesus, was witness of the all-holy, all the divine conduct of that adorable Saviour. He beheld him not only during his infancy, but also during his youth. He can, therefore, teach children and young persons who wish to imitate Jesus Christ and keep themselves chaste what they should do to obtain from God that ineffable favor. Therefore, let them take him as their guide, and let them frequently invoke him, above all, in temptations that might compromise their innocency.

St. Joseph feels the greatest interest in virtuous

young persons, and considers it a happiness to be their protector, because he loves them, and is touched with compassion at the sight of their dangers.

Yes, Joseph loves virtuous young persons. Does he not see in them what he was? Does he not see in them Jesus Christ himself, whose childhood and youth they remind him of? Does he not know that nothing is more beautiful than their souls, which are shining with all the lustre of grace, and in which the Holy Ghost dwells as in his temple?

Joseph, in his glory, participates in the most excellent manner in the dispositions of Jesus Christ. Now, the heart of that divine Master is always full of affection for chaste and religious youth, such as he honored with a special predilection in the person of St. John the Apostle, called the disciple whom Jesus loved. The heart of St. Joseph experiences the same affection, and, therefore, it is true that he loves youth.

But he has also compassion for them because of the great dangers they run; for it is a period of great struggles, the season of life, when the devil fights against the Holy Ghost most fiercely for the possession of hearts. Joseph knew how much men are tried, agitated, disturbed at that age; with what power of seduction the world assails them and seeks to draw them into sin. He knows what need they have of the succor of Heaven to resist the temptations and allurements of pleasure. On that account he offers to be the protector of young persons who wish to keep themselves pure; to be their guide, as he is their model; to obtain for them the graces they stand in need of to preserve their innocence, to recover it, if unfortunately they have lost it.

APPLICATION.

It is young persons whom God calls to the religious life who ought to consider St. Joseph as their patron, and have recourse to his powerful protection. He goes with more love to their help in the combats they have to sustain against the world and the devil.

St. Joseph is the patron of all novices of religious congregations, for they are called to a life like to his—one wholly of union with Jesus and Mary. He is the patron also of those who are preparing for the work of the Christian education of children, for he employed his whole youth in preparing himself for the education of the Child-God who was to be confided to his care.

Let those among us who are still in their youth place themselves in a special manner under his protection, beseeching him to sustain them, to help them, to be their support, their guide, their protector. Imitating his example, let them give themselves resolutely and without reserve to God, who calls them to his service.

Let those among us who have passed that age thank St. Joseph for having been, then, propitious to us, and let us do him homage for their perseverance up till now. We should, moreover, while remembering the dangers we have run, think of those that the young religious whom Providence associates with us have to encounter, and should pray for them to the glorious patron of our Institute.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who wert the protector of Jesus in his infancy and youth, remember that you are such towards all young persons who wish to please God by their in-

nocence and piety. Deign, then, to sustain them in danger, and obtain for them the strength to resist all the evil inclinations of our undisciplined natures.

Protect, O good father, those among us whom God calls to a religious life. Grant that they may enter and persevere therein with the same dispositions with which you consecrated yourself to God in your youth, and with which you persevered in his service.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph is the patron of young persons, for he is their model....their guide....their protector....

He is their model, because he was wholly God's from his youth, wishing to offer him the first fruits of his life....to prevent remorse....to contract holy habits....

For these reasons Joseph, while still young, excelled in purity....in obedience....in chastity....in love of labor ....Everything that makes a pious and holy young man was to be found in him....His heart had none but holy affections, and never suffered itself to give way to the love of creatures....

St. Joseph is the guide of the young, because it is from him chiefly they can learn what they ought to do to make themselves like to Jesus Christ....

He is their protector: 1st, because he loves them;.... 2d, because he is full of compassion for them at the sight of the dangers they run....

Let the young hasten to place themselves under his protection....

Let those who are more advanced in life remember that St. Joseph assisted them in their youth;....let them pray to him with fervor for those who are still at that dangerous age....

FRUITS.—To recommend our novices to St. Joseph; to pray fervently to him for those among our Brothers who are most tried by temptation.

FORTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

JOSEPH SANCTIFYING HIS LABOR.

"Do all things for the glory of God."—1 Cor. x. 31.

CONSIDERATION.

St. Joseph is a model for all religious, whether they give themselves up to contemplation or devote themselves to apostolic labors, or works of charity. The first consider him especially in his union of heart with God. The second ought, like the generality of the faithful, to admire him more especially in the practice of labor—always tending to the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. Both classes can find in his example a powerful motive to make constant progress in the kind of life to which they have been called.

With a view to reap that advantage for ourselves, let us contemplate St. Joseph engaged in the labors of his occupation, and reflect that no man worked with more holy dispositions, or for a more noble end.

St. Joseph labors, in fact, in a spirit of penance and humility; with joy, piety, and courage, in union with Jesus and Mary, and for Jesus and Mary.

Joseph labored in a spirit of penance, remembering that sentence passed upon the first man, *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*,* and looking upon the

* Genesis iii. 19.

fatigues that his occupation imposed on him as a means of satisfying the divine justice.

Joseph labored in a spirit of humility. The descendant of David, and endowed with the best qualities of mind and heart, he chose the humble profession of a carpenter, when no doubt many careers honorable in the eyes of the world were open before him. Ah! it was because he esteemed in that obscure state the very obscurity itself, which did not attract the gaze of men towards him, but left secure against all vainglory.

Joseph labored with joy, as all do who have great courage. His fatigues did not ruffle the serenity of his soul. He was content, because he knew he was doing the will of God.

Joseph labored with piety. He began his work with prayer. He carried it on in the presence of God. Finally, he offered it to that good Master, while thanking him for having helped him by his grace to do it well.

Joseph labored with courage and perseverance. Whatever might be his fatigue, he accomplished each day his laborious task. His poverty made it obligatory upon him; but, nevertheless, he did it far more from motives resting on Jesus and Mary. How, in truth, could he have suffered himself to give way to discouragement, when he saw the great Mother of God toiling like a poor working girl, performing the duties of humble handmaid to every one, and giving herself no other rest than what she found in prayer? How could his soul experience any want of courage, when he looked upon Jesus either as child or youth?

Does not the Son of God, in choosing him as foster-father, show that he wished, from his entrance into

life, to follow a career of suffering—to appear in the world only as a poor artisan, so that it could be said of him: *Is not this the carpenter's son?** Joseph, then, comprehends how, to enter into his views, he ought to lead a life of labor. Moreover, did he not see that divine Child smile upon him while he toiled for him and his most holy Mother? Did he not see him poorly clothed, poorly fed, expecting all from his nursing-father? Oh with what sentiments of piety and admiration was his soul penetrated at the sight of so much humiliation! He could not but feel himself filled with courage.

The relations of Joseph with the Child Jesus seem always of a nature to inspire him with still more strength and courage. What must have passed in the soul of the poor carpenter who had for his apprentice the Master of heaven, whom he trains up to work with him and like him; whom he sees with his divine hands making use of the same tools. Whom he beholds laboring to shape some pieces of wood, gaining his daily bread by the sweat of his brow—thus undergoing himself the punishment passed upon guilty man? He sees that divine Companion of his labor, full of solicitude in his regard, eager to lighten his sufferings, and for that purpose to choose what was most fatiguing in the common labor, as much as the strength of his age allowed him. How must he have felt a superhuman strength in his soul at such a sight? He labored, then, with courage and perseverance, as well as with joy and piety—that is to say, with the most perfect interior dispositions.

* St. Matt. xiii. 55.

Let us consider, in the second place, that he labored for the most sublime end that can be conceived; for did he not propose to himself to please God, and relieve the wants of Jesus and Mary.

What a source of reflection for the pious soul! Joseph gives himself up to the labors of his trade, and can say at every instant: "I do not seek in what I do anything but the accomplishment of his will, who is my sovereign Master. It is for him; it is for his adorable Son; it is for the Queen of heaven that I work. His sweat produces the bread that the Infant God requires, and consequently increases the divine blood that will be shed for the salvation of the world. The wages that he requires at the end of his labor are destined to procure necessaries for Him through whom everything lives. What can be conceived greater, or more admirable? Ah! what matters it that his trade is humble, that his labors have nothing in them to attract the esteem of men. He ennobles them by his dispositions, and by the end he proposes to himself; and such is the dignity thereof, that there is no Christian church that would not esteem it a happiness to possess any of the works of that modest workman, to offer it to the veneration of the faithful.

In fine, after having considered how and for what end Joseph labored, let us ask ourselves what merits he acquired by his labors. Let us remember this principle—that our merits are in proportion to the goodness of our interior dispositions, to the lawfulness of the end we proposed to ourselves, and to our union with Jesus, through whom alone we can please God. Let us consider, finally, that no man labored with

more holy dispositions than Joseph, nor for so excellent an end, nor with a closer union to Jesus Christ. Let us reflect that he labored for a great number of years with a perfection always becoming greater. Let us, then, ask ourselves what ought to be the crown with which God recompenses the zeal of his faithful and devoted servant.

APPLICATION.

As far as we can, with the grace of God, let us work with the interior dispositions which we admire in St. Joseph, and for the same end as he did.

Let us work in a spirit of penance and humility; let us esteem the obscurity of our occupation. For the more obscure it is, our purity of intention becomes easier, and thus it becomes a source of merit to us.

Let us labor for God, and in union with our Lord Jesus Christ. Of what sort would our labor be without that condition? Alas! we should exhaust ourselves in vain. We sow, but without hopes of reaping; our labors would have no merits for heaven; and when the end of our life would have come, we might repeat the words of St. Peter, making the application thereof to ourselves: *Master, we have labored all night, and caught nothing.**

Let us, in a word, labor, like Joseph, for Jesus and Mary, and with Jesus and Mary, and we shall deserve to receive the crown with which the divine Master rewards him in heaven.

* St. Luke v. 5.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who wert the most perfect of saints, teach me to labor with the same dispositions as you. Give me to understand, O my blessed Father, that it is by labor I should expiate my sins, imitate Jesus Christ, and merit to share, one day, like you, in the recompense with which God rewards the good will of his devoted servants.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph, the model of the contemplative life, is likewise the model of the active life....

No one has labored in more holy dispositions, or for more excellent motives....

St. Joseph labored—1st, in a spirit of penance;....2d, with humility;....3d, with joy;....4th, with piety, with courage and perseverance....

What sources of courage did he not find in Mary, whom he saw act as the humble handmaid of all,....and still more in Jesus, either when a child or a youth!

St. Joseph labored for God,....for Jesus and Mary....

Considered in itself, his labor was very humble; but how does it become ennobled by the end for which he devoted himself to it!....

Let us labor, like St. Joseph, in a spirit of faith, with courage, and in union with Jesus and Mary....

FRUITS.—While laboring, to renew frequently our acts of union with Jesus Christ; to propose no end to ourselves but his glory and the salvation of souls.

FORTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS.

"Let us praise our God by venerating St. Joseph, our protector."
—Office of the Patronage of St. Joseph.

CONSIDERATION.

Our Institute being in a special manner under the protection of St. Joseph, it will be very useful for us to make some particular reflections on this subject.

Let us consider, then, the patronage of St. Joseph in regard to our society, in its source and in its motives, and the homage that it has always paid, and still pays to him as its glorious and powerful protector.

When our holy Founder had accepted his difficult and important mission, he felt that he could not establish and perpetuate his work without the special assistance of Providence. Then he examined by what means he could secure this result, and he deliberated, among other means, on that of the patronage of St. Joseph.

Reflecting on the power of that great saint, and the resemblance of the life of the Brothers to his, he was assured that God wished that he should take him as special protector of his congregation. That he should offer him as a model to those who might compose it. That he should lead them to invoke him with fervor, and to form themselves to his likeness; and he under-

stood that on that condition the society would be established, and work much fruit in souls.

Then our Venerable Father, prostrating himself at the foot of the statue of St. Joseph, and addressing himself to that great patron of religious and teachers, said to him: "I entrust to you this rising society, wholly devoted to the glory of the Child-God, to whom you consecrated your life. Permit me, O Joseph, to place under your protection an Institute which is founded only to continue towards the members of Jesus Christ the work you yourself did in regard to that adorable Saviour."

The Church, while approving of our Institute, confirmed that act of our Venerable Father, and in the bull that raises us to the rank of a religious congregation, designated that holy saint our patron.

Oh how dear that choice ought to be to us! Let us recall to mind that St. Joseph was the object of a special vocation to which he faithfully corresponded; that he led a truly interior life, and one wholly united to God; that he only acted from a spirit of faith; that he excelled in obedience, in love of poverty, in chastity, in humility, and that he is thus our perfect model as religious.

Let us also remember that St. Joseph is the model of persons who have charge of the education of youth; that he devoted himself without reserve to that of the Child-God, and that he practiced in a perfect manner all the virtues suited for a teacher.

Let us add that St. Joseph led a life which ours resembles in many respects—a life of self-denial and sacrifice—a life that attracted no notice from men, and was

even the object of contempt on the part of several—a life hidden with Jesus Christ, and to which he devoted himself to concur, on his part, in the work of man's redemption, without expecting any recompense in return but in the order of grace. From such reflections we can understand that our Venerable Father had the justest motives for placing us under the protection of that great saint, and that it is just that our Institute should always offer as it does to its glorious patron a worship of veneration, prayer, and thanksgiving.

Let us remark, in the first place, the character of universality of worship paid to St. Joseph in our Institute. From the commencement of our congregation to the present hour, the Brothers of the Christian Schools have acted towards St. Joseph as to their perfect model, their distinguished protector, and their loving father. Wherever our establishments are to be found, that great servant of God is particularly honored, invoked, and praised.

Our Institute has through the whole period paid a worship of honor to St. Joseph. The Brothers have always looked upon it as a joy and a duty to extol the power of his patronage, to proclaim his prerogatives, to make them known to their pupils, to train up disciples for him, to propagate his worship, to celebrate his feasts, to adorn his altars, to erect statues to him, to venerate his pictures. They unite him in the homage they pay to Jesus and Mary. It is in this worship of honor that each of us is called to associate, and in which we feel the pleasing certainty that no one of our number will ever be found wanting.

Our Institute has paid to St. Joseph the homage of

prayer. How many supplications on the part of our Brothers have ascended to his throne of glory! How many petitions have been presented to him since the time of our Venerable Founder to the present moment! It was to us it was said particularly, *Go to Joseph*, and we have responded to the invitation.

How many of our Brothers, when afflicted by interior trials, have said in their hearts, "Let us go to Joseph," assured as they were that that good Father would procure them repose and peace of heart! How many who, when tried by sadness and despondency, have said, "Let us go to Joseph," and have found in the very prayer then offered him a source of strength, and often even the termination of their troubles! How many, when feeling themselves inclined to tepidity, and through that to sin, have, under the impulse of grace, said, "Let us go to Joseph," and have felt at the foot of his altar the sacred fire of devotion rekindled in their souls!

How holy it is to contemplate this picture of all our Brothers on their knees at the feet of St. Joseph, and how calculated it is to excite our fervor, without which we should there cast a shadow, or rather prove a disagreeable blot!

Our Institute has rendered to St. Joseph a worship of gratitude. Our glorious patron has always been pleased to hear our prayers. He has found a delight in offering our prayers himself to Mary, and with her to Jesus, and thus obtaining for us the object of our petition. It was, then, just on our part to testify our gratitude to him.

How many prayers of thanksgiving have been offered

to him by our Brothers! How many masses have they caused to be offered up for this intention! How many times from the same motive have they spoken to their pupils of his power and goodness, of which they had experienced the effects! Under the impression of joy at having been heard, how many among them have come to the foot of the altar, where they had poured forth their fervent prayers of supplication, to shed tears of happiness, because they had been heard by our beloved patron.

Yes, it is but justice that our gratitude to St. Joseph should be lively, sincere, and constant! How many treasures of grace have come to us through him! Our Congregation has passed through many trials; but our protector has watched it, as when on earth he watched over the Child entrusted to his care, and through his succor it has escaped every danger.

APPLICATION.

Let us appreciate the favor which our society enjoys of being placed under so august a patronage as that of St. Joseph. Let us thank the Holy Ghost who inspired the thought thereof in the mind of our Venerable Founder. Let us offer to our holy patron a worthy homage of veneration, supplication, and thanksgiving. Let us honor him as our Venerable Father honored him, and as our most fervent Brothers have honored him.

Let us go often to the foot of his altar, or before his statues, and there entreat him to be propitious to us. We have need of so many graces; let us urge our case,

then, with him whose mission it is to procure them for us!

Let us pray to him for the Institute, for our superiors, our schools, or novices; let us pray to him for our most edifying Brothers, that they may keep themselves in such good dispositions; let us pray to him for the less fervent, that they may return to the state from which they have fallen; let us pray to him for ourselves, and ask, above all, that we may persevere in our vocation, and die a holy death.

PRAYER.

O glorious Patron of our Institute, permit us, in imitation of our Venerable Founder and a great number of our Brothers who have been your devoted servants, to honor you by a true worship of praise, prayer, and gratitude. Obtain for us that we may be worthy members of our society, which delights to acknowledge you its patron, and which you will protect the more, as it will contribute to make Jesus and Mary known, loved, and honored.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph is the patron of our Institute....

Our Venerable Father has placed us under the protection of that great saint, and has presented him to us as a model.

The Church afterwards confirmed what he had done....

Let us remember that this choice was the effect of a divine inspiration....

Let us recollect that St. Joseph led a life very similar to ours, whether considered as religious or teachers.

Let us remember that he is our model in the spirit of faith....his love of poverty....his obedience....his chastity....his piety;....that he is the model of teachers in the respect due to children....in devotedness....vigilance ....good example....and zeal....

Let us consider that our Institute has paid St. Joseph a worship of veneration, prayer, and thanksgiving....

FRUITS.—To recommend our vocation to St. Joseph; to ask through his intercession the grace of perseverance.....

FORTY-THIRD MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH PATRON OF AFFLICTED SOULS.

"Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God."
—Acts xiv. 21.

CONSIDERATION.

It is with reason that St. Joseph should be regarded as the model and protector of afflicted souls, having been himself exposed to so great trials during the whole time he passed with Jesus and Mary. To him, as to Tobias, the angel could say: *Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.* What does his life present to our eyes but a series of sufferings and anguish, some of a kind that no language can describe? How many contradictions, rebuffs, insults on the part of men! How many apprehensions regarding the life of the Child-God, which was always threatened! How much anxiety to provide for the wants of the Holy Family! Did not all misfortunes seem conspired against him? Might it not have been said of him, that he was born to support immense labors, and to be the prey of unceasing sufferings?

Yes, Joseph had much to suffer; but let us remark how he conducted himself under it, and how deservedly he is the model of afflicted souls.

Joseph suffers, but he does not complain; he does not murmur. He is silent about his misfortunes, and

speaks of them only to God. His heart remains calm in the midst of tribulations. Everything in him announces a soul perfectly resigned. He knows only how to thank Providence in adversity as well as in prosperity. Arming himself with patience, he fortifies himself by resistance to temptation, and never allows a shadow of despondency to enter his heart. On the contrary, he excites himself to continue his work of devotedness and self-sacrifice, and to give himself up to it with so much the more zeal that it is to him a source of punishment.

Joseph, enlightened by the rays of faith, esteems and loves his sufferings; he sees in them only the effects of the goodness of God, who tries his faithful servants, and he would have been afraid to have lost his friendship, if he had been subjected to fewer contradictions.

Joseph, moreover, esteemed sufferings, because they were to him occasions of glorifying God and acquiring merits, but, above all, because he made himself by their means like to Jesus Christ, who did not wish to share in this world anything but poverty, tribulation, and sorrow. Therefore, very far from murmuring, he always made them an occasion for thanksgiving.

Still Joseph sought consolation in his sufferings, but he did not seek it except in God.

Let us consider him under one of those great trials that accompanied the early years of Jesus Christ. He then fixes his eyes upon the divine Child. He interiorly adores him suffering for men, and thus teaching them that their salvation is in suffering borne for love of him; and presently he feels himself consoled, animated, strengthened, inflamed to desire even new afflictions, so as to testify more love towards him.

St. Joseph is consequently the patron of afflicted souls, because he is their model; he is their patron also because he compassionates their sufferings. The soul of Joseph is like to that of Jesus Christ, for he has a very great resemblance to that divine Saviour, as well as the closest union with him. Now, St. Paul teaches that we have in Jesus a High-Priest who knows how to compassionate our infirmities. We can, then, say in all truth that we have in Joseph a compassionate protector, and one always ready to succor us, when we call on him for assistance. Yes, Joseph is the true consoler of afflicted souls. He was too long with Jesus Christ not to learn from that divine Master to say, like him, these words that have brought balm to many a wounded heart: *Come to me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.**

Joseph compassionated souls in suffering, because he had himself suffered much. Those who have experienced no afflictions are very insensible to those of their brethren; but it is not so with those who, like him, have had to experience great sufferings.

Let us add that Joseph is in the highest degree like to Mary, and that Mary is invoked by the whole Church under the title of "Comfortress of the afflicted."

In fine, Joseph is the patron of afflicted souls, because he obtains for them the graces they stand in need of in their painful state.

And, in truth, does not the Church teach us that "whoever wishes to have spiritual health, has only to implore the succor of Joseph?"† What does this signify, but that Joseph helps in a particular manner weak.

* St. Matt. xi. 28. † Response Quicumque.

souls—those that are in desolation of spirit and inclined to despondency. In recompense for the consolations he procured to Jesus and Mary, God gave him a peculiar grace for consoling and assisting those who are in affliction, and who have recourse to his benevolent protection. Therefore, it is to them, above all, that it is said: *Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you.**

Oh how many unhappy souls have followed this counsel! How many souls in desolation of spirit have come to the foot of the altar of St. Joseph, and have there found balm for their wounds—that is to say, the hope of being soon consoled, or the strength to suffer still more, if such be the will of God.

How great is the number, especially of our Brothers, whom our good father has succored, and dried their tears! How many have gone to him in interior darkness whose souls have been restored to peace! How many have gone to him when they were in distress on their own account, or that of persons dear to them, and have experienced that he is never invoked in vain, when invoked with fervor!

Behold, O afflicted souls! how God gives you in St. Joseph a model and a protector. Remember always that he was patient and resigned in adversity; but he never lost heart, but, on the contrary, was strengthened by trials. That he looked on his sufferings only from the point of view of faith, and that, consequently, he esteemed and loved them. That, in fine, he sought consolation only in God, only in Jesus Christ, his adorable Son, the first model and only true consoler of those that suffer. Remember that he is always ready to suc-

* Genesis xli. 55.

cor you, and that nothing is more profitable to you than to have recourse to him with the most entire confidence.

APPLICATION.

The life of man upon earth being a constant warfare, it is not possible that we should be without suffering. Our efforts, therefore, should tend less to avoiding them than sanctifying them.

When we are in suffering, let us imitate St. Joseph, the patron of afflicted souls. Let us accept our sufferings with resignation. Let us support them with courage and in a spirit of faith, and let us seek our consolation only in God.

Like Joseph, let us esteem the trials to which Providence subjects us, remembering that adversity purifies the just soul, as fire refines gold, and that the sufferings of the present life have no proportion with the glory that they merit for us in heaven. If we were faithful imitators of St. Joseph, very far from dreading sufferings, we should first ask the grace of Christian patience, and afterwards that of experiencing a greater number, so as to make ourselves more like to Jesus suffering. We should cry out with St. Theresa, that worthy imitator of St. Joseph, "O Lord, either to suffer or to die."

In fine, let us go to Joseph, our comforter; let us pray to him with fervor and confidence. We shall always find in him a compassionate father, who will hasten to dry our tears, and to procure for us hope, peace of mind, and true joy.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, you whose life was, if we may say so, but a series of sorrows, labors, and contradictions, obtain for us that we may imitate you in the trials to which Providence subjects us. Grant that we may accept them with faith and resignation, so as to merit to be admitted with you into the abode of happiness, where our tears of a few moments will be changed in a happiness that will never end.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph is the patron of afflicted souls, for he is their model when under affliction; he compassionates their sufferings; he procures for them the graces they stand in need of.

St. Joseph experienced all sorts of contradictions and sufferings, but looking at them from the point of view of faith, he was full of resignation and peace, and sought his consolation only in God....

St. Joseph compassionates afflicted souls, for his heart is like to that of Jesus, which pitied our miseries; besides, he knew by experience what it was to suffer....

Joseph is the protector of those who are in suffering. He has received a special grace for that end, in recompense for what he suffered for Jesus and Mary....

Oh how many persons have invoked him in their desolation of soul, and have experienced the happy effects of his assistance!....Let us imitate them when we are in the same situation.

It is not possible for us to live upon earth without sufferings. Let us, then, determine upon our course, and, like St. Joseph, think only of sanctifying our sufferings.

FRUITS.—To bless God in the trials of life: to have recourse to St. Joseph under everything that causes us suffering.

FORTY-FOURTH MEDITATION.

JOSEPH INTERCEDES FOR SINNERS.

"God turned it into good, that he might exalt me, as at present you see, and might save many people."—Genesis l. 20.

CONSIDERATION.

St. Joseph understood better than others how greatly the adorable heart of Jesus and the most holy heart of Mary compassionated the unfortunate; and on that account, yielding to the same sentiment, he implores the divine mercy for them.

But of all the unfortunate, the most to be pitied are surely sinners, and, above all, hardened sinners. Joseph becomes their intercessor with God, and beseeches Jesus Christ to work in their behalf the miracle of grace, that can alone restore them to true life.

St. Joseph beholds them in enmity with God, placed under the power of the devil, hanging on the brink of the abyss of hell, and in danger of being hurled into it at every instant. He recalls to mind the sufferings, the anguish he experienced on the occasion of the loss of the Child Jesus at Jerusalem, though he had only lost him outwardly, and through no fault of his own. He understands how infinitely more their condition is to be deplored than his, since they have lost Jesus through their own fault, and may be at any instant assured in that the separation is forever.

Joseph intercedes for sinners through zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ. He knows that that divine Saviour came into this world principally to deliver men from their sins; that his great work was to make grace abound where iniquity had abounded; that he is the Lamb offered up to efface the sins of the world. He has thought upon, reckoned, if we may say so, what Jesus has done to save man from hell. He knows at what price he valued their souls; for each of whom, after having offered himself up without reserve to the justice of his heavenly Father, he led a life of privations and sufferings, to terminate by the most painful, or, rather, the only true sacrifice. He cannot, then, but be penetrated with zeal for their salvation, and assist them by his protection to recover their innocence, and thereby secure the fruits of the sacrifice of Calvary.

Joseph intercedes for sinners from conformity of sentiment to the heart of Jesus. He understands the desire of that adorable Redeemer—that all men should be saved. He sees how his divine soul was pierced with grief at the thought of the great number who do not wish the salvation he presents to them, and which cost him so much. On that account he strives to bring them back to the path of virtue, and to make them worthy of heaven, and therefore be to the heart of Jesus the source of the sweetest and most ineffable consolation.

Such are the principal motives of the intercession of St. Joseph for sinners. Let us reflect now on the assistance he procures them.

"God," says St. Theresa, "has in some sort made St. Joseph his minister, his plenipotentiary, his

general treasurer in favor of all who are in distress." Therefore, that charitable patriarch draws with promptitude from the treasury of grace, to come to the aid of sinners—that is to say, of persons who, of all in misfortune, have the most need of succor.

Yes, Joseph prays for sinners. He speaks in their behalf to God the Father, and beseeches him, by the merits of Jesus Christ, to take pity on their souls, and give them the grace of conversion. He speaks in their behalf to God the Son; he reminds Jesus that his coming upon earth was for them, even more than for the just, according to these words, *I am not come to call the just, but sinners;** he places before him all that he has done and suffered in his infinite clemency to merit their pardon; and he entreats that so many labors and sufferings may not be in vain. He prays to him for sinners, through his sacred heart, so full of compassion for those sinners; through Mary, their refuge, with whom he unites his prayers; through all that he himself has done and suffered for that divine Saviour during the thirty years he passed with him upon earth. He invokes in their behalf the Holy Ghost. He pleads their cause powerfully with Mary, his holy spouse. Nothing, in a word, is forgotten on his part to prepare and secure their return to God.

Who does not understand from this that he obtains for these unhappy people many and powerful graces of conversion, those interior stings of conscience that excite remorse, make them see all the heinousness of sin, discover to them the beauty of virtue, inspire them with the desire for it, give them the will for it, and

* St. Matt. ix. 13.

raise the sentiments of the soul towards God, who is always ready to forgive. He urges the guilty soul till it cries out with David, *It is I that have sinned.** He makes it embrace with courage and persevere with constancy in a life of expiation, and thus bringing it back by repentance to perfect charity, and through that to peace and happiness?

Besides, these are facts of experience, and all those who are devout to St. Joseph can testify to their truth. Who is there that has recommended a relation or friend to him, and has not seen his prayer heard beyond his hopes? Where is the sinner who, having had recourse to him, with some desire for conversion, has not felt his heart weaned from vice and drawn to virtue, or has not, at least, felt himself solicited thereto by a special grace? Where is the young man who, having placed his future under the protection of St. Joseph, has not the happiness of preserving himself from the contagion of vice, or has not been soon brought back to the path of virtue, if he had the misfortune of straying from it in a season of trial?

It is a well-established fact that St. Joseph intercedes for sinners; that his intercession is most powerful; that to have recourse to him frequently, either for ourselves or others, is to enter fully into the designs of God's providence.

APPLICATION.

Let us invoke St. Joseph as the intercessor for sinners; let us pray to him, first, for ourselves, for we commit so many faults that we are a great subject of

* 1 Paral. xxi. 17.

compassion to him. We know not if we are worthy of love or hatred; whether, consequently, we may not be among the number of those who are in the state of sin. Let us take him, then, for our advocate and our intercessor with God. Let us beg him to offer to Him for us his sweat and weariness in union with the blood of Jesus Christ—the Victim through whom we ask for mercy, and hope to obtain it.

Let us be penetrated with the sentiments of St. Joseph towards sinners. Let us have compassion on their state. Let us excite ourselves to great zeal for the salvation of their souls; and let that zeal lead us, above all, to pray to that great saint for them, and to offer some sacrifice to God to obtain their conversion. Let us remember that this is the work that is most pleasing to the heart of Jesus.

Let us recommend to St. Joseph, those among our pupils whom we see corresponding least to our care; those who appear to us to enter upon the path of evil almost as soon as they have entered upon that of life; those who, after having made some efforts to keep themselves virtuous, have had the weakness to yield to the suggestions of the devil.

Let us recommend to him those among our relations who are least given to religious practices. We owe them gratitude; let us acquit ourselves of the debt by obtaining for them, through the intercession of St. Joseph, the grace of their conversion—that is to say, the greatest blessing that can be procured for them.

PRAYER.

Glorious St. Joseph, we come full of confidence in your charity to ask your intercession in behalf of the souls that are in the state of sin. Obtain for them the grace of comprehending their misfortune, and delivering themselves from it by a perfect return to God and virtue. They will give you glory for it in that heaven which you shall have opened to them by your all-powerful intercession.

RÉSUMÉ.

Joseph intercedes for sinners through pity for them, for he knows how unfortunate they are;....through zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ, which consists, above all, in the salvation of souls;....through conformity of sentiments with that divine Saviour whose greatest desire is that all men should profit by the merits of his sufferings....

Joseph himself prays to the most Holy Trinity in behalf of sinners.

He offers, for their conversion, the merits of Jesus Christ....the graces of Mary....what he himself has done for Jesus and Mary.

Thus he has obtained great graces for them.

Let us have recourse to St. Joseph, who intercedes for sinners. Let us pray to him for ourselves, who are sinners....Let us pray to him for those of our relations, friends, pupils, who may be in a state of sin....Let us remember that to pray for sinners is the greatest work of mercy;....and that we cannot but be heard when we pray to St. Joseph with fervor and confidence.

FRUITS.—To cherish in ourselves sentiments of pity for sinners; to impose on ourselves some sacrifices to obtain their conversion; to recommend success with our pupils to St. Joseph.

FORTY-FIFTH MEDITATION.

ST. JOSEPH PROTECTOR OF THOSE IN THEIR AGONY.

"When he saw that the day of his death drew nigh, he called his son Joseph."—Genesis xlvii. 29.

CONSIDERATION.

Be you also ready, says Jesus Christ, *because at what hour you know not, the Son of man will come.** We ought, therefore, to pass our lives in expectation of the moment that will end it, and which is for us the most important of all, since it will decide our fate for eternity. We ought also to think of the means of securing for ourselves at that last hour the assistance of Heaven.

But next to the assistance of Mary, none can be more profitable to us than that of Joseph, who is all-powerful with the divine Child of his adoption. Let us do, then, all that depends on us to procure it, and for that end let us this day meditate on St. Joseph as protector of those in their agony. Let us see how that title is suitable to him, and of what nature is the protection that he accords them.

St. Joseph is the protector of those in their agony, because he is the best of friends, and it is at the hour of death that we have most need of assistance. In truth, what a moment is that for man when everything passes from him, when all abandon him. When he sees himself on the point of leaving this world of time to

* St. Matt. xxiv. 44.

enter on that of eternity; when he is laboring under the greatest bodily weakness, not being able to attend to his soul, or, if able to do so, asking himself anxiously what sentence the sovereign Judge is about to pronounce! Oh! then it is he that has need of assistance. Therefore it is, above all, at that hour which has appeared terrible even to the greatest saints, that our glorious patron comes to our aid, and thus shows himself our generous friend, when our earthly friends can no longer do anything for us.

St. Joseph is the protector of those in their agony. Knowing what our souls have cost our adorable Saviour, he seizes with eagerness upon every opportunity of opposing the devil, who, at the hour of death, redoubles his efforts to accomplish our ruin. Joseph, who saved the Child Jesus from the fury of Herod, and who procures the grace of strength to all who invoke him in their temptations, is called by the Church "the vanquisher of hell." Could it be that he would not come to the help of the faithful Christian when about to die—at a time when the enemy of salvation was making his last assaults upon him, and multiplying his devices to bring him into sadness, and even despair? He does not abandon him. He makes haste to help him, so as to snatch his prey from the devil, and prevent him from carrying off a soul redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The assistance of St. Joseph towards all in their agony is affirmed by the Church in that response which we recite every day: "Whoever desires to terminate his course of life in joy, let him invoke St. Joseph."*

* Office of St. Joseph.

It may also, to a certain extent, be demonstrated by facts. We indeed have a most striking proof of it in our Institute. That proof is the peace and tranquillity which the great majority of our Brothers enjoy at the approach of death. It is evident that they are assisted in a particular manner by Heaven at that dread moment, and that, under the care of our vigilant and beloved patron, they sleep without trouble the sleep of the friends of God, from which they will awaken in the heavenly country.

St. Joseph is the protector of those in their agony. He received himself at the last moments of his life the most desirable succor and the most ineffable consolations. He, who had the happiness to die between Jesus and Mary has at his disposal particular graces for Christians at the point of death; he has, moreover, the greatest power of intercession with the supreme Judge; it is to him, therefore, we must have recourse to obtain the grace of dying in friendship with God.

Having considered that St. Joseph is the protector of those in agony, let us see how he exercises that ministry of mercy towards those who have recourse to him.

Joseph, the horror of hell, chases the enemies of salvation from the dying man; he remains beside his bed of suffering; he gives him to understand that he has become his defender with Jesus Christ, that he will plead his cause and obtain a favorable sentence. He sustains him by hopeful thoughts, and shows him heaven, which will soon be his inheritance, and Jesus in heaven, who says to him: *Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.**

* Matt. xi. 28.

Joseph places before the eyes of the dying person the most pleasing images; he presents himself to him full of sweetness and goodness. He shows him Mary, his most holy spouse, who is the good mother of all Christians, and whose happiness it is to assist them by her all-powerful protection.

Joseph inspires into the mind of the Christian about to die sentiments of love towards God, conformity to his holy will, perfect detachment from creatures, union with Jesus suffering, and, consequently, gives him the greatest motives for confidence.

Behold in what consists the assistance of St. Joseph towards those in their agony! he continues it to them all the time that the combat lasts; and when the last moment has come—when the bonds that detained the soul in the body are suddenly burst—he takes it in his arms with paternal kindness, presents it to Mary, and, with her, presents it to Jesus, that merciful Saviour, who, while receiving it with love, says to it. "Come, O soul, blessed by my Father in heaven, and in whom my father on earth has felt so great an interest, come to share the happiness of him who was your loving protector, and make yourself the source of the greatest joy to him by testifying a boundless gratitude."

APPLICATION.

After having considered the reasons for which St. Joseph is honored as protector of those in their agony, and the salutary assistance that he gives to Christians in their last moments, let us consider the means of securing it to ourselves.

Those who experience, above all, the effects of the

protection of St. Joseph at the approach of death, are such as have a true devotion to him, and who have asked his assistance for that closing hour. Hence it is easy to deduce what we ought to do to obtain that this inestimable protection be extended to us in those circumstances that will decide our eternal destiny.

Do we wish that St. Joseph may assist us in our agony? let us enter into the practices of his devotion in accordance with the spirit of our Institute. We shall then be able to look without fear at the approach of death. Our holy patron does not abandon those who have a firm, constant, and true devotion to him.

No, no, such shall never perish. They shall not die in sin who have devoted themselves to honor him. That tender father will protect them in the hour of their agony, and will save them from the hands of Satan, as he saved the Child Jesus from the hands of Herod.

Let us honor him, and cause him to be honored as much as depends on us. Let us often pray to him, recommending to him our departure from this world. Let us pray to him for those in agony, of whom there are so many every hour. Let us pray to him for those thousands of persons who, at this very moment, are engaged in that last combat whose issue will be heaven or hell. But, above all, let us try to imitate his virtues, for that is the most certain means of securing for ourselves his all-powerful protection.

Happy shall we be in the day of distress, if we have had a true devotion to St. Joseph. We shall watch with the most consoling peace of mind the approach of our last hour, and we shall see it slowly passing

away with the best-founded confidence that our soul shall quit this land of exile only to be conducted by our glorious patron to its true country.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, protector of those in agony, take pity on such as, at this very moment when I pray to you, are engaged in their last combat. Take pity on my soul when the hour shall have come when I must wage it. Then, O my holy patron, do not abandon me; but in granting me your assistance, show that you are my good father, and grant that my divine Saviour may receive me in mercy into that abode where the elect enjoy a life that shall never end!

RÉSUMÉ.

Joseph is the protector of those in their agony, because he is our best friend; and it is at the approach of death that we have most need of assistance.... He comes to defend Christians in the last assaults the devil makes upon them....

Joseph remembers the assistance he received from Jesus and Mary at the approach of death, and he intercedes for us, that we may enjoy the same advantage....

He himself assists us by his protection, defends us against the enemy of our salvation, and gives us the justest motives for hoping for eternal happiness....

Let us make certain, by a true devotion towards him, of the assistance of our holy patron in the hour of death....

Let us not forget that the best means of obtaining his protection is to endeavor to imitate his virtues....

FRUITS.—To pray for those in agony; to think often on the hour of our death; to implore the protection of St. Joseph for the moment that will decide our hereafter.

FORTY-SIXTH MEDITATION.

LAST MOMENTS OF ST. JOSEPH.

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course."
—II Tim. iv. 7.

CONSIDERATION.

Let us go to the bedside of St. Joseph, at the last moments that he passed in this land of exile; let us enter into his humble habitation, and with the eyes of faith contemplate the spectacle offered to us. Let us see that great servant of God stretched upon his poor pallet, having on one side our divine Saviour, and on the other the most holy Virgin. He is pale, weak, almost without motion; life is flickering within him; his eyes are about to close to the light of this world; he draws near to the end of his holy career. Yes, let us assist at the death of the justest of men, and reflect what it presents to us to console us. Let us consider what it shows of the goodness of God towards those who, in their days of trial, think only how to please him, and desire the fulfilment of his adorable will.

Joseph is about to die; but it is at that moment, above all, that the angel of the Lord might say to him, as to the shepherds of Bethlehem: *I bring you tidings of great joy.* Everything, in fact, is of a nature calculated to produce that sentiment in him, and procure him the most ineffable consolations, whether he recalls

the past, considers the present, or allows his thoughts to penetrate into the future.

Joseph, in dying, looks at the past portion of his life, or rather his whole life, since all is now ending, and each of the moments that compose it is to him a subject of confidence. He recalls the holy actions he has done, the fidelity with which he corresponded to the graces of God, the labors to which he devoted himself for Jesus and his divine Mother. He sees the stable at Bethlehem where he adored at his birth the God made man, the temple where he presented him to God his Father, the land of Egypt to which he brought him to save him from the fury of Herod. He remembers that he never left him, but was always devoted to his service. Then he repeats these words which the great Apostle was afterwards to pronounce: *I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; for the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice.**

The consideration of the present brings likewise the sweetest consolations to Joseph.

A laborer of the divine father of the human family, he has come to the end of the day, and sees the termination of his labors and fatigues. He can apply to himself those words which the beloved disciple was afterwards to write: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.*† He knows that no one more than he had a right to use these words of David: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord the God of truth.*‡

Joseph, in his last moments, sees beside him Jesus Christ, his Lord and his God, who was pleased to be his adopted son, and who assists him with all the ten-

* II Tim. iv 7. † Apoc. xiv. 13. ‡ Ps. xxx. 6.

derness of his divine heart. His eyes are fixed on that deserving object of his adorations, and express the desire of his soul to quit the body which retains it here below, and to go and rest in the bosom of the Divinity it contemplates. Joseph sees also at his side the most holy Virgin, who lavishes the cares of her affectionate charity upon him, while she prays for him to the God who always hears her.

Joseph sees Jesus, and at that sight the holy love already so great in his soul becomes enlarged and attains its perfect development. The heart of Joseph is all on fire with the flames of charity, and it is a fire that burns the last fetters that bind him to earth.

Joseph sees Jesus and Mary, and his intellect, enlightened by the brightest heavenly light it has yet enjoyed, discovers in a greater degree than ever the perfections of the God-man, and the greatness of his most holy Mother. Then his soul enters into an ineffable rapture, and, before having abandoned earth, already dwells in heaven.

The consideration of the present, like the memory of the past, brings, then, the greatest joy to Joseph on his death-bed. It is so, likewise, with his anticipation of the future.

He looks upon the eternity on which he is about to enter, and experiences in his heart sentiments of the firmest confidence, because his conscience bears testimony to him that his long life was only a series of good works, performed from the purest motives, and in the greatest perfection.

Yet he knows that being man he must undergo the judgment that fixes the eternal lot of all; but he knows

also that he who will pronounce it is Jesus, his dear Jesus, he for whom he has devoted himself without reserve—Jesus, his God who, at that very moment, reveals to him that he is on the point of recompensing him as God for the numberless cares lavished on him. He hears him in advance repeat these words of supreme felicity: "Come, O blessed of my Father, you who have been his representative in my regard, you whom I have so often called my father; yes, come, O my father, to possess the kingdom prepared for you; come to reign with me in the mansions of eternal glory."

St. Joseph knows very well that his soul will go into limbo, but he knows also that it is for the purpose of announcing to the patriarchs and prophets that the time is fulfilled; that the Son of promise, the Flower of Jesse, the Desired of nations, has come to his own temple; that heaven is about to be opened, and the glory they have hoped for is to be made their inheritance.

No, no, there is no subject of pain to him in the view of the future! Joseph, when dying, sees dimly the heaven into which he will soon enter with his adorable foster-child, and he sees in that abode of the magnificence of God the throne prepared for himself. He enjoys in the greatness of his confidence something of the unlimited happiness he will enjoy near Mary, his queenly spouse, and in presence of Jesus Christ, whose humanity will then shine with all the splendor of the divinity.

It is in these dispositions that his soul passes from time to eternity, to possess there all the ineffable happiness that had here been the object of his hope.

APPLICATION.

Let the contemplation of Joseph dying reanimate our confidence and excite our courage.

Our life, as religious teachers, is in many respects like his. We can, then, hope that the end of it will be similar, and that, after having devoted ourselves with complete self-denial to the work entrusted to us, the God whom we serve will recompense us, as he has already done to so many of our Brothers, by a holy death.

Soon we shall come to our last hour. Yes, soon our career here below will be ended, to have nothing before us but the ocean of eternity. What sentiments will this awaken in our souls?

Will it be a sweet confidence, a slight anticipation of the happiness of heaven we shall have merited, or a too just fear of being found worthy of condemnation? Shall we, at our last hour, be assisted by the most holy Virgin, or shall we have reason to apprehend that she will refuse her succor? Will Jesus Christ be our consolation and strength, or will he leave us a prey to all the terrors of death?

Let us remember that this depends on our correspondence with grace; that if we imitate St. Joseph, our soul will be like to his, and our death resemble his; that Jesus and Mary will assist us in our last struggle with hell; and when the Angel of the Apocalypse shall say, regarding us, *Time shall be no more*,* our guardian angel will answer, "But for this soul there shall be a happy eternity.'

* Apoc. x. 6.

PRAYER.

O glorious St. Joseph, whom I contemplate dying between Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, as well as for all those who are dear to me, the grace of leading a life like to yours, so that we may die, like you, the death of the just, and assisted in our last struggle by our divine Saviour and his most holy Mother.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us contemplate St. Joseph in his last moments.... The past is to him a subject of consolation, for all his life is filled with good works....

The present offers him likewise the most pleasing enjoyments. Does he not see at his side Jesus and Mary bestowing their cares upon him with the greatest affection?.... It is then, above all, that the fire of charity burns in his heart, and that his sole desire is to plunge himself in the bosom of the Divinity he contemplates!....

The future has nothing that can cause him the least trouble. His works will follow him into eternity. Now what are they but holy works?....

His judge is Jesus, his own adopted son. His soul must go into limbo, but it is to announce to the just their approaching deliverance....

Joseph, when dying, enjoys in anticipation the happiness that is to be accorded to him in its fulness....

Oh how happy are those who die in the same dispositions as Joseph!....

FRUITS.—Frequently to recommend our last hour to St. Joseph; to pray to him for those in agony; to encourage ourselves to live well by the thought of the happiness a holy death procures.

FORTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION.

ON THE DEATH OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Into thy hands I commend my spirit."—Ps. xxx. 6.

CONSIDERATION.

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints,** says the Royal Prophet. Now, there is no one of whom those words could be said with more reason than of Joseph, who was raised to so high a degree of sanctity and justice. Yes, his death was precious in the sight of God, because it was the recompense of his virtues, and because it was of itself eminently meritorious.

Let us consider, then, the principal characteristics of that death, and understand by the lessons it gives us how great is the liberality of God towards his faithful servants.

The death of Joseph was holy. Ah! how, in truth, could a life sanctified by the constant practice of the most heroic virtues be other than crowned by a most holy death? How could the just and devoted man who, for the love of Jesus and Mary, had spent himself in toil, fail to enjoy in his last hour the repose which God grants to his true servants? Could it be that he would not be received favorably by the Eternal Father, he who had so worthily filled his place near Jesus and Mary? Could it be that he should not die holily, he

* Ps. cxv. 15.

whose whole life was one unbroken series of holy actions? Oh no; it was but just that God should say to him: "Come, good and faithful guardian of my Son; the hour is come to reward you for your devotedness: enter into the joy of your Lord."

The death of St. Joseph is then precious in the sight of the Lord, because it was the recompense of his holy life; but it is no less so through its character of union with the death of Jesus Christ, and through the practice of the virtues of which it was the occasion.

Joseph knew that the Lamb of the new Covenant was to die for the salvation of the world, and that the greatest act of perfection men can produce here below is to unite himself to the death of Jesus. Therefore, he caused that act of union, and thus in advance applied to himself the merits of that blood that was soon to flow on Calvary.

But by how many acts of virtue was the death of Joseph accompanied? Ah! could we know the dispositions of his holy soul at the moment when it was leaving this place of exile, how much submission, charity, and detachment from creatures should we discover there!

Joseph accepts death with perfect resignation. During his whole life he had said by his actions: "Behold me, O my God, ready to do thy holy will." He could not but repeat it at his last hour.

Joseph dies absolutely disengaged from all earthly affection, and while producing the most perfect act of charity he had yet produced. His love for God was a fire burning bright from day to day, and which at that moment burned with its greatest splendor.

The death of Joseph was, then, eminently meritorious; but let us consider, moreover, how it was to him full of confidence and consolation. How could it have been otherwise? Did not his conscience bear him testimony, that he had always responded to the will of God; that he had desired nothing so much as to be pleasing to him; that he had made it his whole study to act conformably to his holy law, and persevere in justice? He had reason, then, to expect that in appearing before God, who had become his adopted Son, he was rather going to assist at a triumph than undergo a judgment.

Moreover, did he not see beside him that Saviour full of love, who, with the most holy Virgin, brought him the sweetest consolations? Did he not hear him speak to him of the everlasting happiness that was to be his inheritance? Let us represent to ourselves Jesus addressing him in sentiments of the most lively tenderness: "O you whom my heavenly Father caused to protect and support me in my youth—you who loved me more than yourself, and labored so much for me and my most holy Mother—open your heart to sentiments of the greatest joy, for in reward for your virtues, I come as man to give you the kiss of peace, and as God to bless you with a blessing whose sweetness shall last through all eternity. Go, O loving father, go to announce to the just who have gone before you that I shall soon come to deliver them, and introduce them, with you, into the garden of endless delights."

The death of St. Joseph is also full of consolations on the part of Mary. He sees his most holy spouse

keeping close to his side, lavishing her care upon him, and returning him thanks for all he has done for her. He hears her thank him, and with that voice which he knows well is always heard, say to him: "Receive, O loving spouse, the tribute of my gratitude for the sufferings without number to which you have been subjected on my account! May the God of heaven, who has loved men so much as to give them his only Son, through his humble handmaid, recompense your heroic virtues!"

The death of Joseph is also full of consolation to him through the thought of the great things that were soon to be accomplished. That holy patriarch sees, by faith the kingdom of God establishing itself throughout the world, the devil vanquished and enchained, heaven opening for men, and the just admitted to supreme felicity. Then, with a feeling of happiness, he perceives that his last moment has come.

If the aged Simeon, after having for a moment pressed to his heart the Infant-God, cried out in his transport: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace: because my eyes have seen thy salvation....a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people of Israel,** what must have been the sentiments of St. Joseph, who, during thirty years, had enjoyed far greater advantages?

And now let us see in imagination the angels of heaven assisting at the last moments of the holiest of men, waiting until the moment fixed by Providence should have arrived; let us contemplate them receiving

* St. Luke ii. 29.

his holy soul from the arms of Jesus himself, to conduct it in triumph into the assembly of the just of the old law.

Let us see Jesus and Mary paying the last duties to the virginal body of him who has just left them, revering those sacred relics that were never to see corruption, but which were destined to be restored to life on the day of the resurrection of our Saviour, and to become the ornament of the heavenly Jerusalem.

APPLICATION.

If we wish to die as St. Joseph died, let us live as he lived; if we wish to be assisted and consoled in our last hour by Jesus and Mary, let us, like him, live only for Jesus and Mary. Let us remain in their holy company, walk in their presence, serve them with fidelity and courage, and then we may be assured that our death will be precious in the sight of God, and full of confidence for us.

Let this meditation on the death of St. Joseph be for us a motive for exciting our confidence in God. As religious teachers, we are laboring at the work for which Joseph devoted himself. We dedicate our lives to making Jesus and Mary live in our hearts and in those of our pupils. Have we not every reason to hope for the grace of a happy death?

Oh let us not doubt. It is by a holy death that the worthy children of the Venerable de la Salle crown their life of self-sacrifice, and that grace is obtained for them by their glorious patron; for St. Joseph loves those who, like him, have no thought, will, or strength but

for Jesus and Mary, and he obtains for them the grace of closing their earthly career of Jesus and Mary.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, O holy patron of a good death, I take refuge at the foot of your altar, to implore you to succor me at the moment when the sovereign Judge will call me to appear in his presence. When my eyes shall be ready to close to the light of this world, when my tongue shall be able only with difficulty to repeat the names of Jesus and Mary, come then to me—come to present my soul to God, who wished to be to you as a son, and obtain that the sentence he shall pronounce over me may make me a partaker of the glory you enjoy in heaven.

RÉSUMÉ.

Let us consider how the death of St. Joseph is to God precious, meritorious, sweet, and glorious....

The death of Joseph is precious in the sight of the Lord, because it is the fruit of his holy life, the recompense of his works, which were all according to justice....

The death of Joseph is meritorious to him: 1st, because he accepts it in union with Jesus dying, and thus applies to himself in advance the merits of the Victim of Calvary; ....2d, because he submits to it with perfect resignation, and in sentiments of the most perfect charity....

But what consolations Joseph finds in the presence of Jesus....in that of Mary!....

Let us hasten to Jesus and Mary, blessing him at the moment he is about to quit them....

In fine, let us consider the angels assisting at the death of this just man,....and receiving his holy soul from the hands of Jesus....

Let us contemplate Jesus and Mary venerating his virginal body, to which they pay the last duties....

FRUITS.—To keep ourselves in the hope of dying a holy death, if we discharge well the duties of our state; frequently to invoke St. Joseph as the patron of a happy death.

FORTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION.

RESURRECTION OF ST. JOSEPH.

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and....I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, an in my flesh I shall see my God."—Job xix. 25.

CONSIDERATION.

"If the Saviour-God," says St. Bernardine of Sienna, "wished, in order to satisfy his filial piety, to glorify the body as well as the soul of Mary on the day of her Assumption, we can and ought piously to believe that he did no less for Joseph, so distinguished among all the saints; that he raised his body again on the day after his own resurrection, when he called so many others from the dust of the tomb, and that thus the Holy Family, which had been united on earth by a community of sufferings, and the bonds of the same love, reigns now in body and soul in the glory of heaven."

St. Francis of Sales is of the same opinion as St. Bernardine of Sienna. "It seems to me," says he, "that no one can doubt the fact that God raised Joseph's body and soul into heaven."

Many celebrated doctors, and among others Suarez, hold the same language on this subject, and think that God granted Joseph not only the privilege of leaving limbo and entering heaven on the day of his glorious ascension, as he did to the other just, but that also of

rising from the grave and ascending in body and soul with him to heaven.

We may even believe, with a great number of the servants of that great saint, that his body never experienced the corruption of the tomb, but that it was, after death, preserved incorrupt by the power of God until the time of the resurrection of our Lord, when it was restored to life, to be the first visible ornament, after the divine Humanity, of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Let us believe, then, with all true devotees of St. Joseph, in this prerogative so glorious to him, and let us consider the reasons for which it has been granted to him.

Jesus Christ preserved Joseph from the corruption of the tomb, and afterwards raised him to life through an effect of his filial love. Let us remember that he loved him more than any son ever loved his father; he must, then, when death was about to separate Joseph from him as man, have experienced the desire that the sacred body which had been his living altar should escape from the corruption of the grave. Now, who could hinder him from realizing this desire, similar to what he afterwards formed regarding the most holy Virgin?

Joseph, when dying, could say, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my soul and my body;" but Jesus, who, through his angels, received his blessed soul, received himself into his arms the body of his good father, and in paying to his body the last duties, could have said in advance: *I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live;** and he

* St. John xi. 25.

must have wished to verify it in the person of him who was his guardian and protector.

Jesus Christ favored St. Joseph with the prerogative on which we meditate, through gratitude for his self-devotedness. Joseph had, in fact, many times saved him from death. It seemed but just that he should in turn save him from the horrors of the tomb.

Jesus Christ glorified the body of St. Joseph because of its union with his. How often had it been in contact with the sacred flesh of the Word of God, which is essentially vivifying! How many times had the hands of Joseph touched the divine Child! How many times had his body appeared to make but one with that of Jesus! How could our adorable Redeemer have allowed him to remain in the tomb!

Jesus Christ accorded this prerogative to his foster-father to recompense him for his holiness. He should on the day of his resurrection triumph over death not only in his own adorable person, but also in that of his saints. Many among them were to return to life at the same time as he, and become thus, in body and soul, the companions of his glory, and as St. Joseph was of all the just the one most pleasing in his eyes, the greatest in sanctity, he should also be the first among those saints that were to be so privileged.

Jesus Christ wished to glorify the body of St. Joseph, so that his adopted father might have a greater resemblance to Mary, his august spouse. He wished him to participate in the prerogative with which she was favored, and that the Holy Family should be in body and soul in heaven, and as it had been united upon earth.

But the prinipal motive for which Jesus wished to glorify the body of Joseph was to recompense worthily him who had been the purest of men.

It was meet that the just man who had carried with so much glory the standard of chastity should be preserved from the corruption of the tomb; that his virginal flesh which had always been like a resplendent lily in the sight of God should be transplanted to heaven without being decomposed by death. Yes, when Joseph on his death-bed said, "I know that in my flesh I shall see my God," Jesus gave him to understand that he might sleep full of hope; that on the day of his resurrection he would raise him from the tomb, and that in his pure and holy flesh he would see him in his glory, and enjoy his adorable presence.

APPLICATION.

Let us esteem and preserve unblemished our chastity —a virtue so beautiful and so pleasing to God, which gives to the flesh of man something divine, which even death seems to respect.

Let us sanctify our bodies more and more by fervent communions, remembering that the adorable flesh of God in the holy Eucharist leaves in ours the germs of life and the source of a glorious resurrection.

Let us extol St. Joseph, honored by God even in his body. Let us exclaim with a pious author:* "Blessed is the body of Joseph, the living throne of the divine Word during his minority on earth, the moving tabernacle of the Divinity dwelling with men, the living altar of the Victim of salvation! Blessed is that virginal

* Pére Jacquinot: Glory of St. Joseph.

body, destined to shine in the foremost rank among the stars of heaven."

Let us thank God who has rewarded Joseph with so much munificence, and let us learn thereby how great is his liberality to those who consecrate themselves to his glory. Let us reflect that we also must rise again one day; but let us never forget that for our body to be like that of Joseph we must have preserved a chastity worthy of our holy state, for it is only those who have pure hearts who can say with full hope these consoling words: *I know that I shall rise again, and that in my flesh I shall my God.*

PRAYER.

O Jesus, who had glorified Joseph not only in his soul, but also in his body, we thank you for that prerogative with which you honor our holy patron, and by which you recompense his inviolable purity. Deign to grant us, through his protection, the grace of imitating him by perfect chastity, and of thus meriting to be admitted to contemplate you, with him, in the mansion of your glory.

RÉSUMÉ.

It is a pious and creditable tradition that Jesus Christ raised St. Joseph from the grave at the time of his own resurrection....and that he raised him in body as well as soul to heaven on the day of his glorious ascension.

Let us thank him for having thus glorified our beloved protector....

Let us reflect on the reasons for which he did so....

Jesus Christ glorified the body of St. Joseph as an effect

of his filial love.... through gratitude because of the union of his body with his own, which is essentially the source of life....

Jesus Christ glorified St. Joseph even in his body, to recompense him for his sanctity....to give him that trait more of resemblance to Mary....to show the esteem in which he held the purity of him who was the purest of men....

FRUITS.—To communicate often, and always with great fervor, so that the flesh of Jesus Christ may be to us an effective principle of a glorious resurrection; to preserve chastity inviolably; to beg the grace of it by the intercession of St. Joseph.

FORTY-NINTH MEDITATION.

GLORY OF ST. JOSEPH IN HEAVEN.

"Crowned with glory and honor."—Heb. ii. 19.

CONSIDERATION.

Our piety to St. Joseph takes delight in considering him the creature most exalted in glory in heaven, next to the glorious Mother of our divine Redeemer. Oh how sweet it is to consider him crowned with honor, placed on a throne of light, shining with the splendor of God, who communicates himself to him without reserve; blessed by the legions of celestial spirits, and the innumerable multitude of the elect; distinguished in the highest degree among the saints by Him whose happiness it is to glorify his servants according to their virtues, and who crowns his own gifts in crowning their merits!

Let us not imagine that these are only pious suppositions. No, there is nothing but what is probable in the opinion that St. Joseph is, after Mary, the highest in heaven. It is the opinion of several doctors, and particularly of Gerson, Suárez, and of M. Ollier, who teach that St. Joseph having held while on earth the first place in grace and charity, holds it likewise in heaven.

Moreover, to be convinced of this, it is sufficient to

reflect on the prerogatives of that holy patriarch, on the virtues he practiced, and on the words of holy Scripture which teach us what it is that makes the greatness of the saints in heaven.

Joseph was distinguished from all men by the dignity of his mission, which the seraphim themselves would have considered it an honor to fulfil. God, who confided that mission to him, wished also to distinguish him from the other saints by a greater degree of glory.

Let us remember his relations with the adorable persons of the most Holy Trinity, and considering, as St. Bernardine of Sienna says, that the prerogatives of St. Joseph are not only preserved to him in heaven, but even increased and made perfect, let us strive to give ourselves an idea of the glory he enjoys.

God the Father glorifies him as his representative near his adorable Son, and is pleased to clothe with his own splendor him whom he had invested with his authority when on earth. God the Son glorifies him as the just man who best reproduced the perfections of his heavenly Father—as one who was most devoted to himself whilst upon earth; and after having made it his happiness to honor him here below, our divine Saviour, always so full of love and gratitude, makes it his delight to continue that homage in heaven. God the Holy Ghost glorifies him as his representative near the most Holy Virgin, and as the purest and most holy man that has ever been.

Does not the most Holy Virgin Mary, who here below honored him as her spouse, and the worthy foster-father of Jesus, delight to celebrate his greatness, and to thank God, who recompenses his services towards

her, and still more towards her adorable Son? Do not the angels count it a happiness to honor Him whom the King of kings has so honored, and whom they see seated at the right hand of their Queen? Do not all the saints glorify him in uniting him with Mary in the same homage of veneration? When they praise the Virgin-Mother of God, do they not praise her holy spouse, who was honored with the name of father by Jesus?

Still, among the saints there are no doubt some who honor him in a more particular manner. These are such as have been assisted by his protection, for whom he asked and obtained the graces of perseverance or conversion—who recognize him as the first author, next to God and Mary, of the happiness they enjoy. With what joy do they lay their crowns before his throne! With what transports do they proclaim his greatness! With what gratitude do they thank the Most High for the power given to him in heaven, and to which they are indebted for their salvation.

If we were permitted to behold the multitude of the elect who with so much joy glorify St. Joseph, how many of our Brothers should we distinguish among them?

How many of them, in truth, during all their life, made it a happiness to honor, invoke, and imitate Him, and have obtained through his intercession the grace of a holy death?

The consideration of the prerogatives of St. Joseph points him out to us as occupying the first place in heaven after Mary. It is so also with the consideration of his virtues.

What ought to be the recompense of him who, from the purest motives of faith and charity, led a life of labor, self-denial, and suffering; who was the most faithful and devoted of the servants of God, whose holiness, prudence, and goodness he has most sensibly expressed in his own person; who was the purest, the chastest of men, and whose heart burned with the same fire as the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary? How can we imagine with what glory God rewards that just man, when we reflect that he became more and more perfect up till the close of his long career on which he had entered, gifted with such eminent sanctity? Our merits are in accordance with the degree of our union with Jesus Christ; but who was more closely and constantly united than Joseph to that adorable Mediator? Who therefore has acquired more merits for heaven?

Besides, let us recall here some words of the Holy Ghost in reference to the glory of the elect, and see if they do not confirm the subject on which we are meditating.

The Gospel says: *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet.** What ought we to think in reference to St. Joseph, who received the Word of God as the Word of God, but that he must enjoy in a singular degree the very glory of God?

Jesus Christ teaches that God exalts those who humble themselves; but who excelled more in humility than St. Joseph? who, consequently, has more right to be exalted in heaven? *In my Father's house there are many mansions,*† says our divine Master; but to

* St. Matt. x. 41. † St. John xiv. 2.

whom will he give the first of these mansions, but to him who was the representative of his Father in regard to him—to him to whom he himself so frequently gave that very title of father, and who offered him his own house as an asylum?

In fine, let us consider that the sentence of the elect being founded upon what they have done in reference to Jesus Christ, there is no one to whom the words of happiness are more applicable than to St. Joseph: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in.**

It is, then, a well-established truth that St. Joseph is, next to Mary, the most glorious among the saints.

APPLICATION.

Let us congratulate St. Joseph on the glory which is his inheritance, but, above all, on his fidelity to the graces of God, by which he merited it. Let us often recall to mind that singular glory, and remember that we are destined to share it, one day, with him, if, like him, we correspond to the designs of God.

Let the subject we meditate on, and which is so consoling to us, penetrate us thoroughly with these great maxims of religion—that God is liberal to his faithful servants; that he gives us infinitely more than we give him; that those alone understand their true interests who, in imitation of St. Joseph, make it their whole study to advance in the path of virtue.

* St. Matt. xxv. 34, 35.

Let us beg our holy patron to help us to understand these principles, so fruitful in practical consequences, and to make us act conformably to them in our conduct.

PRAYER.

O holy Joseph, who, by your virtues, have merited to be raised in glory to the highest degree next to the most holy Virgin, obtain for us from God's infinite mercy, that we may be your faithful imitators, and correspond faithfully to the designs of God upon us, so as to be admitted to share your happiness, and to thank you forever for your merciful protection.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph is, next to Mary, in the highest degree of glory. To feel assured of this, it is sufficient to reflect on his virtues and prerogatives.

St. Joseph was the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus. In heaven he is glorified by God the Father, to whom he has been the most faithful of servants;....by God the Son, who had already so honored him on earth; ....by God the Holy Ghost, whose representative he was near the most holy Virgin....

Joseph is honored by Mary....

He is, with still more reason, honored by the angels and saints....He is honored, above all, by such among those last who owe their final perseverance to his intercession....

Joseph, so glorified because of his prerogatives, is equally so because of his virtues.

God gives more glory to his elect in proportion as by

the perfection of their lives they have acquired more merits. Joseph led, in union with Jesus and Mary, the most perfect and most meritorious life. Therefore, he is among the saints the one that is most glorified.

FRUITS—To bless God for the glory with which he recompenses our holy patron; to esteem only what can make us partakers of it; to ask, through the intercession of St. Joseph, a great fidelity to grace, so as to acquire abundant merits for heaven.

FIFTIETH MEDITATION.

POWER OF ST. JOSEPH IN HEAVEN.

"That the nations might know his power."—Eccles. xlvi. 8.

CONSIDERATION.

To give us an idea of the power which St. Joseph enjoys in heaven, it is sufficient to consider the intimate relations of that glorious patriarch with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, with the most holy Virgin.

Joseph, when on earth, was that faithful and prudent servant to whom God the Father entrusted the care of his family, whom he clothed with his own authority, to whom he made Jesus and Mary subordinate, and whom he placed over his house—that is to say, over the whole Church. What, then, must be the power that he has at his disposal in heaven, since not only does he lose nothing by entering there, but the advantages which he enjoyed here below are, on the contrary, wonderfully increased and perfected?

No, we cannot doubt that God communicates to St. Joseph an unlimited power; that he says to him in the truest sense these words of Pharas to the son of Jacob: *Thou shall be over my house, and at the commandment of thy mouth all the people shall obey; only in the kingly throne will I be above thee.** Neither can there be any doubt that he sends us to that all-powerful minister of

* Genesis xli. 40.

his goodness, saying to us: *Go to Joseph; and do all that he shall say to you.**

The relations of St. Joseph with God the Son prove equally that he has at his disposal all power by intercession in heaven. Yes, we may be certain, as St. Bernardine of Sienna teaches, that Jesus Christ, who, during his mortal life, rendered to Joseph the respect and obedience of a son to his father, pays him still the same in heaven, where he has preserved to him his sublime prerogatives.

Let us remember the degree of dependence in which that divine Saviour wished to place himself in reference to him. Let us remember that it was Joseph procured for him, by the sweat of his brow, the bread with which he was fed; that he was his guide and his support, and constantly lavished on him the cares of a most loving and generous father. Let us consider, in fine, that the divine heart of Jesus could not lose its sentiments of gratitude and love; and let us understand that that adorable Saviour gives in heaven an unlimited power to him who, while on earth, sacrificed himself for him without reserve; that St. Joseph has the right of presenting himself before the throne of the Lamb with the certainty of being always heard.

The relations of St. Joseph with the most holy Virgin prove also the great power he enjoys in heaven. Mary, called by the fathers an all-powerful intercessor, can do all things by her intercession with her divine Son. But how could that sweet sovereign, who never rejects those who pray to her, even when they are sinners, refuse anything asked her by Joseph, her holy

* Genesis xli. 55.

spouse, who was always so good to her? What could she refuse to him who refused nothing to her—to him, above all, who, for her adorable Son, resigned himself to so many privations, labors, and sacrifices? It is, therefore, with pleasure she grants the petitions he presents to her, or unites with him in those he presents to Jesus.

Moreover, the Holy Family exists still in heaven; St. Joseph is its head. There can, therefore, be no limit to his power.

The power of St. Joseph is thus proved by the consideration of his relations with God the Father, with Jesus Christ, and with the most holy Virgin. It is also established by the agreement of the doctors of the Church, and the instructions of the Church.

"St. Joseph," says the seraphic Theresa, "has always heard me beyond my prayers and hopes. I do not remember to have ever asked him anything that he did not grant me. Other saints assist us in special necessities. The power of Joseph extends to everything....I have always seen that those who have a true devotion to him, sustained by good works, make great progress in virtue; for that heavenly protector favors in an extraordinary way the spiritual advancement of those who recommend themselves to him."

"There are saints who have the power of protection in certain circumstances," say St. Bernard and St. Liguori; "but to St. Joseph it has been given to succor in all kinds of necessity, and to defend all those who have recourse to him, with piety."

"How happy we should be," says St. Francis of Sales, "did we merit to have a share in the interces-

sions of St. Joseph; for nothing will be refused to him either by Our Lady or her glorious Son."

"It has pleased God," says the blessed Leonard of Port Maurice on this subject, "that people of every state should have a special confidence in the protection of St. Joseph; for in the house of Jesus and Mary other saints ask for favors; but Joseph arranges and obtains all he wants. As spouse of the Virgin Mary, and as foster-father of the God-Man, he is, by intercession, omnipotent in heaven."

The Church confirms what the saints teach of the power of St. Joseph, for she says in the response in his honor: "Joseph, just, faithful, and blameless, obtains all that he asks."

Lastly, experience in this respect holds the same language. Whoever had recourse, with faith, to the protection of St. Joseph without experiencing the effects of it? What have we asked with fervor of our glorious patron that we have not obtained? Ah! if we knew what he has done for us, for our families, for our congregation, how persuaded we should be that Christians can do nothing more advantageous than address themselves to him in all confidence!

APPLICATION.

It is to us, above all, who are religious teachers, that the counsel has been given to have recourse to Joseph in entire confidence. What advantage would it not bring us, whether considered personally or in reference to the work at which we labor? Let us be assured that we have in him an all-powerful friend at the throne of grace, an advocate who has all power over

the heart of our Judge, a benefactor always disposed to assist us in our wants.

Let us pray to him with fervor for the holy Church, of which the humble abode of Nazareth was the first cradle. Let us pray to him for our congregation, so fortunate in being placed under his protection.

Let us pray to him for our relations, who, in the midst of the cares of this world, have so great need for the special assistance of Heaven. Let us beg him to be their guide in the fulfilment of the duties of their state, to make piety and concord reign among them, to obtain for them the grace of leading a holy life, and of dying, like him, in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Let us pray to him for our pupils, who run such great dangers in regard to the salvation of their souls.

Let us pray to him for ourselves, that he may protect us against the devil, the world, and the flesh; that he may make us triumph over the temptations to which we are subjected, and persevere in the most spotless chastity and most edifying piety.

But let us not think it enough to implore the intercession of St. Joseph; let us thank God for having made him so powerful in heaven, and so charitable to us; let us thank our glorious patron for the goodness with which he hears our prayers, the interest he bears us, and the many proofs of care he has given us up to this day. It is in this way we shall show ourselves his worthy clients, and secure his assistance more and more, through which the treasures of grace will be laid open to us.

PRAYER.

O Joseph, who dost enjoy so great power of intercession in heaven, deign, we beseech thee, to make use of it in our behalf. Obtain for us the victory over the enemies of our souls, the practice of the virtues of our holy state, gratitude for the gifts of God, and particularly for those which we owe to thy protection. Grant, O holy patron, that we may be, one day, admitted to heaven, there to thank, with you, the God of goodness who, at your prayer, shall have received us into the bosom of his infinite mercy.

RÉSUMÉ.

St. Joseph enjoys unlimited power in heaven....He could not, when entering there, lose his prerogatives. In some sense, then, he has still authority over Jesus and Mary....

Our divine Saviour always honors him as his father, his protector, his guardian, and grants him all that he wishes....

Mary, whose intercession is omnipotent, always sees in him her holy spouse. She can, then, refuse him nothing....

A great number of doctors have proclaimed the unlimited power he enjoys with God....

The Church says that he obtains all that he asks....

How many reasons have we, then—we, above all, to whom, he is so favorable—for having recourse to him with the most perfect confidence.

FRUITS.—Often to invoke St. Joseph, but, above all, in times of temptation; to thank God for having given him so great power of intercession; to thank St. Joseph himself for having been pleased to make use of it, both in behalf of our congregation and of our ourselves personally.

FIFTY-FIRST MEDITATION.

FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH.

"He....hath exalted the humble."—St. Luke i. 52.

CONSIDERATION.

To enter this day into the spirit of the Church let us celebrate with a calm joy the greatness of St. Joseph; let us rekindle our fervor and excite ourselves to the firmest confidence in the protection of the glorious patron of our Society.

Let us reflect, in union with Mary, that the Lord hath exalted in the person of St. Joseph the most humble and most faithful of his servants. Let us recall to mind how he distinguished him among all men.

If it is a great thing to have authority over the mighty ones of this world, what must we think of him who has been placed over the Lord of lords and the Queen of heaven? If it is an honor to approach the monarchs of earth, what must be the dignity of Joseph, who lived for thirty years in the greatest intimacy with the King of kings?

If it is a dignity to exercise noble and important duties, what shall we say of the dignity of him who was the representative of God the Father towards God the Son, and of God the Holy Ghost towards the most holy Virgin, and who, first among men, took into his arms

and presented to Heaven the Victim of our reconciliation, the Lamb who offered himself for the salvation of the world?

Joseph was the foster-father, the guide and protector of Him of whom the holiest of the children of men said: *There shall come one mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose.** The angels, those lofty and perfect intelligences, deem it a glory to be the messengers of God to creatures. What, then, must be the dignity of Joseph, who was the messenger of God to his adorable Son! Those blessed spirits venerate the most holy Mary, saying to her: "Hail, O Queen!" Joseph can say to her, in all truth: "Thou art my spouse, O Immaculate Virgin!"

Thus, in whatever point of view we place ourselves, it is evident that St. Joseph was raised to a supereminent dignity; that the Lord exalted him in an ineffable manner by choosing him as the spouse of Mary and the foster-father of Jesus. Let us consider him now in reference to the virtues he practiced, and which, no less than his prerogatives, hold him forth to the admiration of Christians.

Joseph, says the Gospel, *was a just man.*† Now, all authors affirm that the justice here referred to is the assemblage of all virtues, carried each to its highest degree. All acknowledge in St. Joseph an entire faith, a firm hope, a most ardent charity, the most profound humility, and most sublime obedience—all, in a word, represent him to us as the worthy spouse of Mary—that is to say, as the most pious, the most chaste, the most holy of the children of men—the one who, in the

* St. Luke iii. 16. † St. Matt. i. 19.

qualities of his soul, most resembles the most holy Virgin, the most perfect of pure creatures.

Joseph, so great through the prerogatives with which God favored him, is no less so through the heroic virtues he practiced; but he is so, above all, through the glory with which God, even here below, rewards his fidelity.

Let us remark, in the first place, the character of universality which devotion to St. Joseph is assuming. What is more calculated to make us admire our glorious patron than to see him thus honored over the whole world? Nearly up to our times he has been forgotten, if we may say so, by even the most virtuous Christians, and now he has become the object of a veneration that is always increasing. Everywhere altars are raised in his honor; everywhere his name is blessed by men of all conditions; everywhere there is a great willingness to place themselves under his patronage.

Yet, this glory is nothing compared to what he enjoys in heaven. Let us contemplate him in the New Jerusalem, on the loftiest throne next to that of Mary, shining with the brightness of the divine Lamb, who is the Sun of that city of light, receiving the homages of the angels and saints, who celebrate with joy his sublime prerogatives, blessed by God the Father, whose representative he is, and who has communicated to him his name and rights over his eternal Son—blessed by that adorable Son who always recognizes him as his adopted father, and who continues towards him his gratitude and love.

The dignity of St. Joseph is, then, above the power of language to describe, whether we look at his pre-

rogatives and virtues, or consider the glory he enjoys on earth and in heaven. We should also, while opening our hearts to the sentiment of holy joy, rekindle our fervor towards him, and our confidence in his intercession.

Yes, let us celebrate his feast with joy. And is it not a true happiness for good children to honor a father whom they love, or to clients to praise a generous benefactor? Now, is not Joseph our most loving father, our most generous protector? Besides, does not this day bring with it the sweetest consolations? Is not this festival a memorial of all the mysteries of the divine Childhood—that is to say, of all that religion presents to us of touching and sublime? What is it in the eyes of the Christian soul but a day passed with the Holy Family, in that house of Nazareth where one breathes the perfume of heaven, and where God himself dwells with men?

Let this feast serve us as an occasion on which to reanimate our fervor. Let us remember that we can never honor our holy patron more than by showing by our acts that we really take him as our model. Yes, if we wish to please him we must be pious, zealous, fervent, religious—truly animated by the spirit of God.

In fine, let us excite ourselves to the greatest confidence in St. Joseph. Let us ask of him to-day, through his intercession, some special graces, and let us firmly hope that they will be granted to us. On this subject let us recall to mind the words of St. Theresa, which are a summary of the sentiments of the saints: "I do not remember," says she, "to have asked anything, for some years past, of St. Joseph, on the day of his feast,

that I did not obtain.... What a picture I should present to the eyes, had I the power of relating the graces with which God has overwhelmed me, and the dangers, both of soul and body, from which he has delivered me through the mediation of that great saint! This is what many others whom I have advised to recommend themselves to that incomparable protector have experienced as well as I."

APPLICATION.

Let us have recourse to St. Joseph, and pray to him with piety and confidence for all that interests us. Let us recommend to him our Society, so fortunate in being under his patronage; let us beg him to continue to protect it, defend it, and maintain it in regularity and fervor.

Let us pray to him for our relations, our friends, and our benefactors; let us beg of him to obtain for them all, many, and efficacious graces of salvation.

Let us recommend to him our pupils, asking him to watch over them as he watched over the Child Jesus, and to aid us in the exercises of our duty.

Let us pray to him for ourselves personally; let us ask some special grace, through his intercession, either for the present or some future time; but, above all, let us beg him to obtain for us final perseverance.

Ah! from whom should we demand that greatest of all graces, but from St. Joseph, the patron of a good death? and when should we ask it of him, if not to-day, when the Church celebrates his happy passage from time to eternity—when she honors the events which was to him the commencement of that glorious life by which the God of heaven recompenses his virtues?

PRAYER.

Animated with the same confidence as your servant, St. Theresa, I come, O great St. Joseph, to implore the succor of your protection; obtain for me, on this day of your feast, the grace which you know to be most necessary for me to advance the glory of the Child Jesus, to imitate your virtues, and to secure for myself the inappreciable happiness of perseverance in justice.

RÉSUMÉ.

To enter into the spirit of the Church on this day of the feast of St. Joseph:

1st, Let us extoll the greatness of our glorious patron. Let us thank God for the prerogatives with which he honored him. Let us recall to mind the mission of St. Joseph in reference to Jesus and Mary, and the graces that were given him for that purpose.

2d, Let us honor him for his fidelity to those graces. Let us admire him, meriting through his virtues, the title of the *just man.* Let us think of his faith, his hope, his charity, his humility, and his obedience....

3d, Let us reflect on the glory he enjoys in recompense for his virtues—glory on this earth, where devotion to him is spreading more and more; glory, above all, in heaven, where he is next to Mary....

4th, Let us awaken in ourselves a holy joy at the thought of the glory of our beloved patron....

5th, Let us rekindle our fervor, for that is the chief means of glorifying him as he asks of us....

6th, Let us pray to him with the most entire confidence for the Institute....our relations....our pupils....and for ourselves personally.

FRUITS.—To ask some particular grace to-day through the intercession of St. Joseph; to beg him, above all, to obtain for us the grace of final perseverance.

FIFTY-SECOND MEDITATION.

FEAST OF THE PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

"Go to Joseph."—Gen. xli. 55.

CONSIDERATION.

THE feast we celebrate to-day has a double object: the protection given by St. Joseph to the Child Jesus and the most holy Virgin, and the assistance he brings to Christians. To enter into the spirit of the Church, we should praise and thank this great servant of God for all he has done for Jesus and Mary; we should recall to mind his solicitude, his devotedness, and his labors for the holy family; we should honor him as the head of that society so justly called the Trinity on earth; we should also meditate on the character of the patronage he extends to Christians, and more especially to religious.

A patron is at once protector, guide, and model. He should have, as protector, the power and will to do good to his *protégés;* as guide, an acquaintance with their wants, and knowledge of their duties; as model, all the qualities and virtues that are suitable to their profession. Thence it is easy to be understood that St. Joseph is the true patron of Christians. And, in fact, how great must be his power in heaven where, according to the expression of several doctors, he com-

mands rather than asks? How great too must be his will to do us good, and help us in working out our salvation? Who can guide us better than he in the work of making ourselves like to Jesus Christ, with whom he lived for so great a number of years? Or where, in fine, can we seek for a more perfect model of the virtues that ought to characterize a Christian?

He is, then, the patron of all in every state of life, age, and circumstance, because he always presents himself to them as their protector, their guide, and their model.

Therefore, he is honored as patron by the rich and the poor, masters and workmen, religious and persons engaged in the work, the young and the old! It is to him that they have recourse in all the important circumstances of life; it is through him, particularly, that they ask the grace of a holy death.

Yes, all the faithful may behold their patron in him. Besides, is it not what is generally done? How many works are undertaken under his auspices! How many associations have taken his name! How many apostles of the faith confide their missions to him! How many fathers of a family pray to him for their children! How many churches and oratories are being erected under his name! Who can give a just idea of the number of prayers addressed to him from all countries, and by persons of all conditions!

That general recourse to the protection of St. Joseph proclaims aloud its efficacy; for if Christians are everywhere eager to place themselves under his patronage, it is because universal experience shows that nothing is more advantageous, and that he who was

the protector of Jesus and Mary—that is to say, of the new Adam and the new Eve—counts it a happiness to be such to all Christians, who are their children, and make but one with them.

But if St. Joseph is the patron of all Christians, he is more particularly the patron of religious. Whether cloistered or engaged in an active life, all find in him a protector, a guide, and a model. Therefore, how many founders of orders have placed their societies under his patronage, persuaded that they could not do better than commit themselves to the protection of him of whom the Church says that he has been placed over the whole house of God! It was thus our Venerable Father acted, who, enlightened by God, understood that nothing could be more profitable to us, since St. Joseph would not refuse to protect and direct us, and because he had practiced in their perfection all the virtues required of us as religious or teachers.

Yes, St. Joseph is our protector. The Church presents him to us as such in the Bull of Approbation of our Institute, and all the past experience of our congregation speaks to us of his assistance.

Who can tell us for what singular favors the congregation in general, and the communities of which it is composed, as well as individuals who have been, and others who still are its members, are indebted to him? How many dangers he has kept from us! How many times he has aided us in critical circumstances! Who can tell us how many Brothers are indebted to him for their vocation, their progress in virtue, their success in their classes, and their merits for heaven! Who can tell for how many he has procured the grace of graces

—that is to say, a holy death? Let us recall to mind those whom we have known, and who have left this world for a better. How great was their calm and confidence at the approach of death! Far from fearing it, did they not appear to desire it? Let us be assured that it was because they obtained for that period that decides our eternity the assistance of our glorious patron.

But not only is St. Joseph our protector, he is also our guide and model. Who knows better than he the ways of perfection, and what can lead us most surely thither! Who better than he can instruct us in our duties in reference to the children confided to us! Did he not excel in all the virtues that ought, above all, to characterize us in our profession? Let us recall his spirit of faith, his charity, his confidence in God, his love of an interior life. Let us reflect on his humility, so profound; his obedience, so prompt and so generous; his angelic chastity and piety. Let us consider, also, his unalterable patience, his ardent zeal, his vigilance, his devotedness, his respect for the divine Child confided to his care; and let us be convinced that here is truly the model shown to us on the Mount, whom we ought to strive to resemble, if we wish to correspond to the designs of God upon us.

APPLICATION.

Let us always remember that we are the *protégés* and imitators of St. Joseph; but let us think of it more particularly on the day of the feast of his patronage.

Let us excite ourselves to the most lively gratitude at the thought of the blessings for which we are in-

debted to him personally, and of those for which our congregation thanks him. Let us thank him with our whole hearts for his assistance towards us, and towards our Brothers.

Let us renew our confidence in his intercession; let us remember that he is all-powerful over the heart of Jesus, and always disposed to succor us. Let us, then, address ourselves to him with faith and piety; let us pray to him for our pupils, that they may form themselves on the model of the Child Jesus, and become worthy of their eternal destiny; let us pray to him for our relations, that he may aid them to complete the work of their sanctification, so difficult in the world. Let us pray to him for the Institute, that he may continue to protect it and maintain it in regularity and fervor; let us pray to him for ourselves personally; let us expose to him the wants of our souls; let us beg him, above all, to remember that he is the patron of a good death, and that it is through him we hope to obtain that inestimable grace which can alone secure us the happiness of heaven.

Let us adopt to-day the firm resolution of reproducing in ourselves the virtues we admire in him; let us not forget that it is principally by imitating him we honor him as our patron, and induce him to continue his assistance to us.

In fine, let us train up our pupils to have great devotion to St. Joseph. Let us engage them to take him as their patron, and to imitate his piety, his fidelity, his love of labor, his chastity, his devotedness, and his patience in the trials of life.

PRAYER.

Remember, O St. Joseph, that you are our glorious patron. Regard with an eye of kindness the family of the Venerable de la Salle, so fortunate in being under your protection. Keep it in the spirit of faith and regularity, which makes its strength and life, and obtain for each of its members the grace of imitating your virtues, and of dying, like you, in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

RÉSUMÉ.

A true patron is at once a powerful and benevolent protector, a sure guide, or holy model.

St. Joseph is evidently the true patron of all Christians, and, above all, of all religious....

He is all-powerful over the heart of Jesus;....he is full of goodness towards those who invoke him;....he is the model of all Christians, in whatever circumstances they may be placed....Therefore, he is their patron, and all the faithful are anxious to honor him by that title....

A great number of religious orders have placed themselves under his patronage. Our Institute has that inestimable advantage....Let us behold, then, in St. Joseph our protector....our guide....our model....whether as religious or teachers....

Let us recall to mind how he practiced faith, obedience, and humility....all the virtues that become us in our state;....and let us strive to walk in his footsteps

FRUITS.—To thank St. Joseph for his protection towards ourselves individually and the Institute; to pray to him with confidence for our pupils, our relations, and our congregation; to ask him, above all, to obtain for us the grace of a happy death.

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